SCIENCE FICTION

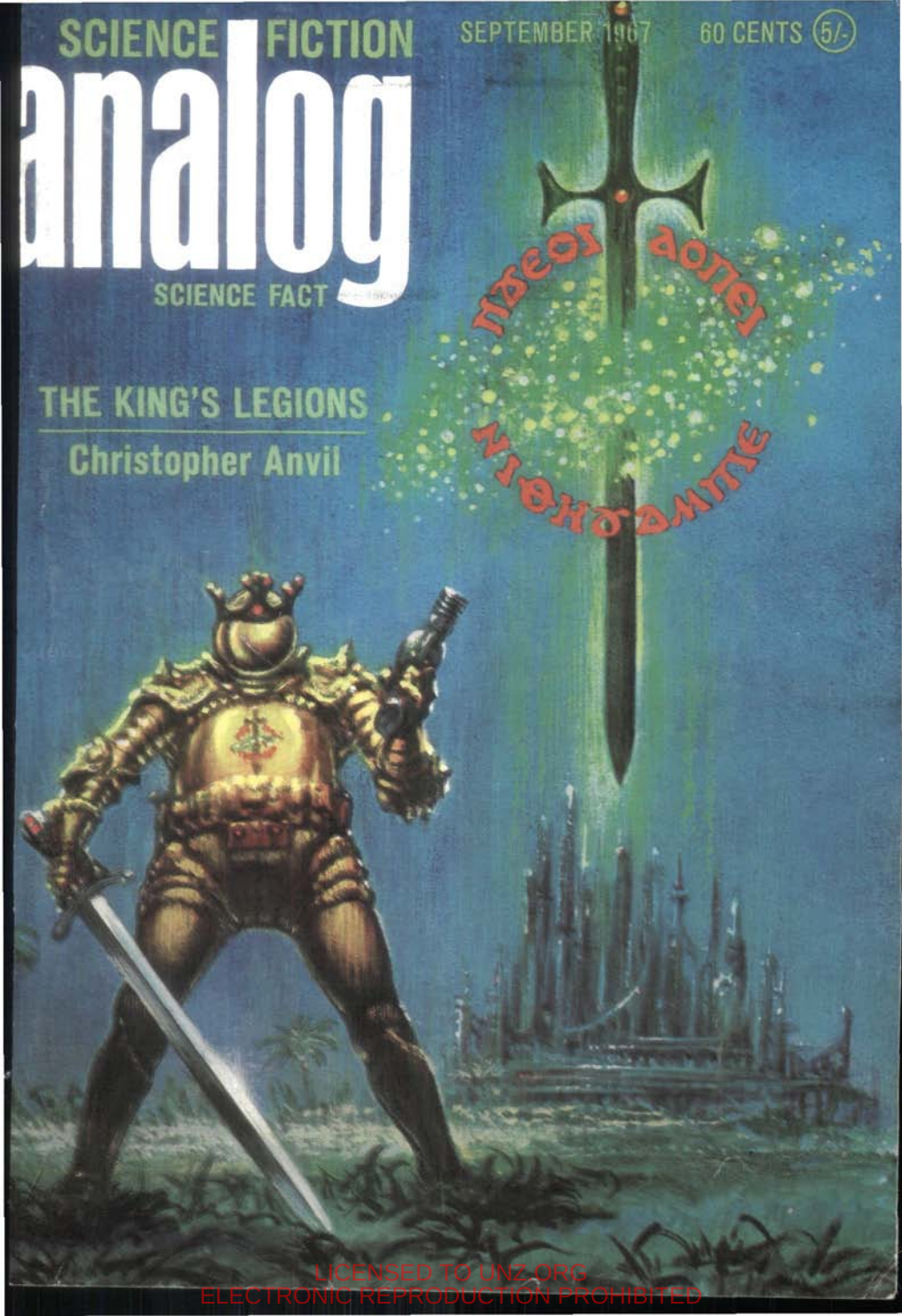
analog

SCIENCE FACT

SEPTEMBER 1967 60 CENTS 5/-

THE KING'S LEGIONS

Christopher Anvil

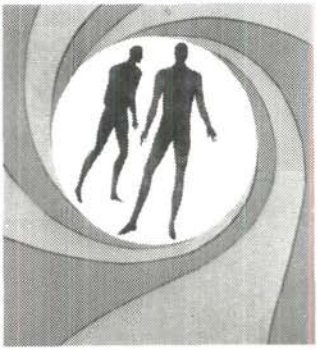


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BACK THROUGH TIME,
FORTH THROUGH SPACE...
WITH DOUBLEDAY SCIENCE FICTION

THE TECHNICOLOR® TIME MACHINE

Harry Harrison. When you've got a movie studio, a script for a Viking epic, a star with the broadest measurements in Hollywood, *and* a time machine, what could be simpler than taking the whole crew back a thousand years to shoot the picture against a really authentic background? Well, for one thing, the return trip could be simpler. But it couldn't be funnier. $3.95



PLANET RUN

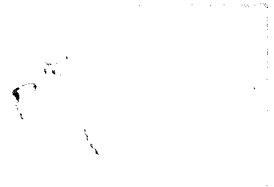
Keith Laumer and Gordon R. Dickson. At age 135, Captain Henry wants to retire. He's opened up so many planets and taken so many rejuvenation treatments that he's earned a rest. But powerful Senator Bartholomew won't let him, not with a newly discovered planet to be staked out. So Henry goes, taking Bartholomew's priggish son with him, thereby setting the space stage for a most bizarre "conflict of generations." $3.95

DOUBLEDAY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MAIL ORDER SHOPPING MART UNUSUAL VALUES

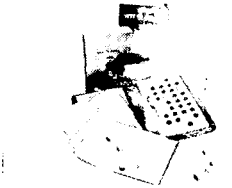
A selection of products available by mail for readers of Analog.
All merchandise sold on a money-back guarantee. Order Direct by Stock No. Send check or M.O.



BIG BOOM & FLASH CANNON
Perfectly safe giant noisemaker for sports, parties, the 4th and just plain fun produces brilliant flash and loud bang. Completely harmless—no gun powder, matches or recoil. Easily operated. Economical replacement of regular Army 60 MM cannon in battle exercises. "Action" is provided by safe, [illegible] with water in chamber produces gas. Cannon, ball ejected by harmless flame or harmless concussion. Incl. ammo for 200 shots, instr. Wt. 2¼ lbs. $5.75 Ppd. Order #70,655A. Extra ammo (about 400 shots) $1.00. #P-41,655A. Edmund Scientific Co., Barrington, N.J. 08007.

Giant Weather Balloons

"Balls of fun" for kids, traffic stoppers for stores, terrific for amateur meteorologists. Create a meteorological sensation. Great backyard fun. Exciting teach attraction. Amateur meteorologists use to measure cloud heights, wind speed, and temp. Made of heavy duty neoprene. Inflate with vacuum cleaner or auto air hose or locally available helium for high rise. 8' diam. $2.00 Ppd. Order #A. 10' diam. $7.00 Ppd. [illegible]. Edmund Scientific Co., Barrington, N.J. 08007.



Wff'n Proof—Games of Logic

Practice abstract thinking and math logic. Developed by Yale prof. If you think learning should be fun, try WFF'N PROOF brain-to-brain combat! 21 games of progressive difficulty. Starts with simple games mastered by 6-year-olds, ends with subtle logic for challenge professional logicians. 8½" x 5¾" case contains logic cubes, playing mats, timer & 224-p. book. $6 Ppd. Order Stock No. 60,525A. Edmund Scientific Co., Barrington, N.J. 08007.

New Model Digital Computer

Solve problems, tell fortunes, play games with miniature version of giant electronic brains! Adds, subtracts, multiplies, shifts, complements, carries, memorizes. Colored plastic parts easily assembled. 12" x 3½" x 4¾". Incl. step-by-step assembly diagrams, 32-p. instruction book covering operation, computer language (binary system) programming problems & 15 experiments. $5.98 Ppd. Order No. 70,681A. Edmund Scientific Co., Barrington, N.J. 08007.

AMAZING NEW HOLOGRAMS

Now evaluate tremendous impact of almost unbelievable new 3-D photo-technique for small cost. Simple transmission-type holoram result of splitting laser beam. Dimension appears carved in stone. Cut in half repeatedly—parts still contain full scene. Fantastic future potential. Use slide projector light source or flashlight bulb filament. Filter incl. Film: 4" x 3¾" Hologram. $15.00 Ppd. Order #40,969A. 2" x 1⅞". $4.50 Ppd. #30,574A. Glass: 4" x 5" $30.00 Ppd. #40,984A. Edmund Scientific Co., Barrington, New Jersey 08007.

WOODEN SOLID PUZZLES

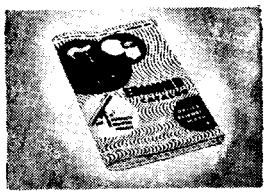
Here's a fascinating assortment of 12 different puzzles to provide hours of pleasure and stimulate ability to think and reason. Animals and geometric forms. Take them apart and reassemble them. Lots of fun for the whole family —young and old. Will test skill, patience and ability to solve problems. Order yours now. $3.50. Ppd. Order Stock No. 70,205A. Edmund Scientific Company, Barrington, New Jersey 08007.

INSTANT CHEMICAL LIGHT KIT

Product instant illumination without heat, flame, electricity. Make emergency flashlight, write messages in the dark, create spectacular "magic" effects, mark trails, targets, edges of steps & doorways, etc. Just expose activating chemical to air. 500 times brighter than average highway in moonlight. Last 15 min. to 4 hrs. depending on control factors, indefinitely when sealed. Kit incl. chemical in 5 forms. $5.00 Ppd. Order #60,647A. Edmund Scientific Co., Barrington, New Jersey.

GIANT NEW SPACE-BIRD KITES

Terrific fun for kids of all ages. Kites climb, zoom, glide. Wings flutter in bird-like fashion. Will tow ice & roller skaters, small boats & rafts. No tails. No running to launch. 3-D aero-space design. Made of bright red, yellow, blue tear-proof acetate cloth. Wing span 47", length approx. 33". Easily assembled. 250 ft. cord & instr. incl. $3.98 Ppd. Order #70,901A. DELUXE MODEL—5½ ft. x approx. 47", plus 500 ft. cord & reel. $6.95 Ppd. #80,-101A. Edmund Scientific Co., Barrington, New Jersey 08007



Giant Free Catalog

Completely new 1967 Catalog. 148 pages packed with nearly 4,000 unusual bargains. Exciting new categories. Many new items. 100's of charts, illustrations. Many hard-to-get war surplus bargains. Enormous selection of telescopes, microscopes, binoculars, magnets, magnifiers, prisms, photo components, etc. For hobbyists, experimenters, workshops. Shop by mail. No salesman will call. Write for Catalog "A" to Edmund Scientific Co., Barrington, N.J. 08007.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SCIENCE FICTION ■ SCIENCE FACT

analog

JOHN W. CAMPBELL
Editor
KAY TARRANT
Assistant Editor
HERBERT S. STOLTZ
Art Director
ROBERT E. PARK
Business Manager
WALTER J. McBRIDE
Advertising Manager

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE
September 7, 1967
$6.00 per year
in the U.S.A.
60 cents per copy

Cover by
Kelly Freas

Vol. LXXX, No. 1 September 1967

NOVELETTE

THE KING'S LEGIONS, Christopher Anvil 8

SHORT NOVEL

FIESTA BRAVA, Mack Reynolds 74

SHORT STORIES

THE PEARLY GATES OF HELL, Jack Wodhams 54
IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE, E. G. von Wald 133
LOST CALLING, Verge Foray 145

SCIENCE FACT

THE USEFULNESS OF NICOTINE, Prof. J. Harold Burn FRS 65

READER'S DEPARTMENTS

THE EDITOR'S PAGE 5
IN TIMES TO COME 143
THE REFERENCE LIBRARY, P. Schuyler Miller 162
BRASS TACKS 169

COPYRIGHT © 1967 BY THE CONDÉ NAST PUBLICATIONS INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.
Analog Science Fiction/Science Fact is published monthly by the Condé Nast Publications, Inc. Executive, Publishing, Editorial and Advertising offices: 420 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. I.S.V. Patcevitch, President; Alfred W. Cook, Treasurer; Mary E. Campbell, Secretary. Second class postage paid at New York, N. Y. and at additional mailing offices, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Subscriptions: In U. S., possessions and Canada, $10 for two years, $13 for three years. Elsewhere, $8 for one year, $16 for two years. Payable in advance. Single copies: In U. S., possessions and Canada, 60¢. Six weeks are required for change of address. In ordering a change, write to Analog Science Fiction/Science Fact, Boulder, Colorado 80302. Give both new and old address as printed on last label. The editorial contents have not been published before—except The Usefulness of Nicotine —are protected by copyright and cannot be reprinted without the publisher's permission. All stories in this magazine are fiction. No actual persons are designated by name or character. Any similarity is coincidental. We cannot accept responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts or art work. Any material submitted must include return postage.
POSTMASTER: SEND FORM 3579 to ANALOG SCIENCE FICTION/SCIENCE FACT, BOULDER, COLORADO 80302.

EDITORIAL AND
ADVERTISING OFFICES:
420 LEXINGTON AVENUE
NEW YORK, N. Y. 10017

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LET SANITY DIE

An editorial by John W. Campbell

The dangerous teratogenic characteristics of thalidomide could not be detected until many months after it had been used, and then only in users under certain special conditions. (I.e., pregnancy, three months along, in a young woman who was short of B vitamins. It did not affect any other mammalian species and, therefore, could not be detected by animal tests. It did not affect young pregnant women who were getting plenty of vitamins.)

In discussing the thalidomide disaster, I pointed out that there would always be risk in any drug newly introduced, because only when widely used over a considerable period could all its side effects be discovered. Even, I pointed out, twenty years or more of use might be required in the case of a drug that had some effect on the user's genes such that the user's children turn up sterile. That sort of effect could not, of course, turn up in much under two decades.

It now appears that we may have an actual instance of something approaching that sort of a delayed-action time bomb—a drug which, there is now reason to believe, affects the user's genes—LSD.

There's no proof of such an effect yet, of course—just the evidence that LSD can produce peculiar genetic twists in the microscopic study of blood cells. For real proof, it would require a wide, statistical study of children produced by LSD users, and that will necessarily require a good many years.

In the meantime, it will be interesting for the LSD users to wait and wonder what sort of mutagenic effect the drug may have had on their cells. Will their children be very unusual indeed? If Mama went on a trip, will her baby be really out of this world?

My own private interpretation of LSD has been for some time "Let Sanity Die!".

Those who are psychologically dependent on it—it doesn't cause any physiological habit-forming changes, but it definitely shows psychological addiction—have naught but praise for the wonders of LSD. They call it a consciousness-expand-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing drug, say it vastly increases creativity and imagination, makes possible understandings of great brilliance and depth, that it yields religious revelation.

Claims like that are hard to deny, of course, because they're almost one hundred percent subjective, and subjective measure is something our present culture is totally incapable of.

However, I am completely sure myself that the LSD-ers are suffering from serious hallucinations and delusions—included among which is the delusion it is a consciousness-expanding and creativity-increasing drug.

It isn't. It doesn't. I have evidence that's perfectly and completely objective and measurable.

Some researchers into the effects of LSD—not the ones who have succumbed to psychic dependency on it—say that what LSD does do is to allow the conscious mind to explore the involute mazes of the subconscious. The "expansion" is more of an "inpansion"; the stuff can be used to treat acute neurotics and psychotics: Under some conditions. If the individual is of a particular personality type. With trained psychological help. And that doesn't mean just "a psychiatrist," because the psychotherapist must have special training in dealing with the LSD-effects before he can help rather than hurt.

Some personality types acquire so powerful a psychic dependency on the hallucinatory state that they can't come off "the trip," even after the first experience. Others get stuck in absolute dependency the second or third "trip."

Basically, hallucinogens allow the individual to reject reality at will, whenever he wants to. Reality is a realm of hard discipline, harsh punishment for mistakes or miscalculation, and unremitting pressure. It makes continuous demands on mind, brain and body, enforced by pain and/or the psychic pain-sensations called "guilt," or "frustrations," or "embarrassment."

Reality imposes in a dictatorial, authoritarian, harsh and unarguable manner "You do *not* have a right to your own opinion—when that opinion does not correspond with facts. You must pay for your whims —whether you think so or not."

Dealing with reality imposes acute pains and frustrations; it requires self-discipline, accepting logic that's hateful, and consequences you don't want.

Sanity is a complex system of balanced logic and hyper-logical rationality. It imposes, with absolute and inescapable power, the necessity to forgo arrogance, yet remain bold, to yield your best-beloved opinions, yet work determinedly for your judgments.

Sanity is an exceedingly difficult business of balancing diametrically opposed forces—with severe penalties imposed by the Universe for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

failure to strike the proper balance.

You must take risks—but to be foolhardy is to ask for sudden disaster.

You must have strong determination and self-respect—but arrogant intransigence brings destruction.

LSD can relieve you of all these tensions. You go "on a trip" and leave that hateful realm of external pressures and disciplines behind, for a world of your own creation. LSD is the drug that says "Let Sanity Die!"

So do opium, laudanum, heroin, morphine, cocaine, morning-glory seeds, jimsonweed, peyote, mescaline, and a thousand other herbs and synthetic chemicals.

Some of them are both psychic-dependency drugs and physiologically addictive; some are simply psychic-dependency inducers. Their effect depends on the individual to a large extent. That individual-response characteristic is one of the reasons that heroin originally came on the market—by reason of a strange fluke of fate.

Some individuals are completely immune to heroin's addictive characteristics. They're rare; their immunity is due to a peculiar metabolic characteristic that is, essentially, undetectable in any other way. Just for them, heroin is an effective local anesthetic-analgesic with almost no side effects or addictive power. These individuals are rare in the population, and are almost invariably stable, strongly-self-disciplined personalities. The kind you're apt to find in a scientific laboratory working on long-term programs that require slow, determined, repetitive and patient testing.

When heroin was first synthesized in a German pharmaceutical chemistry laboratory, animal experiments indicated it was an effective analgesic of low habituation power.

The first human tests were made on members of the laboratory staff, of course. They all found it was an effective analgesic, and even repeated doses had no habit-forming characteristics. So it was released for medical testing on a clinical basis.

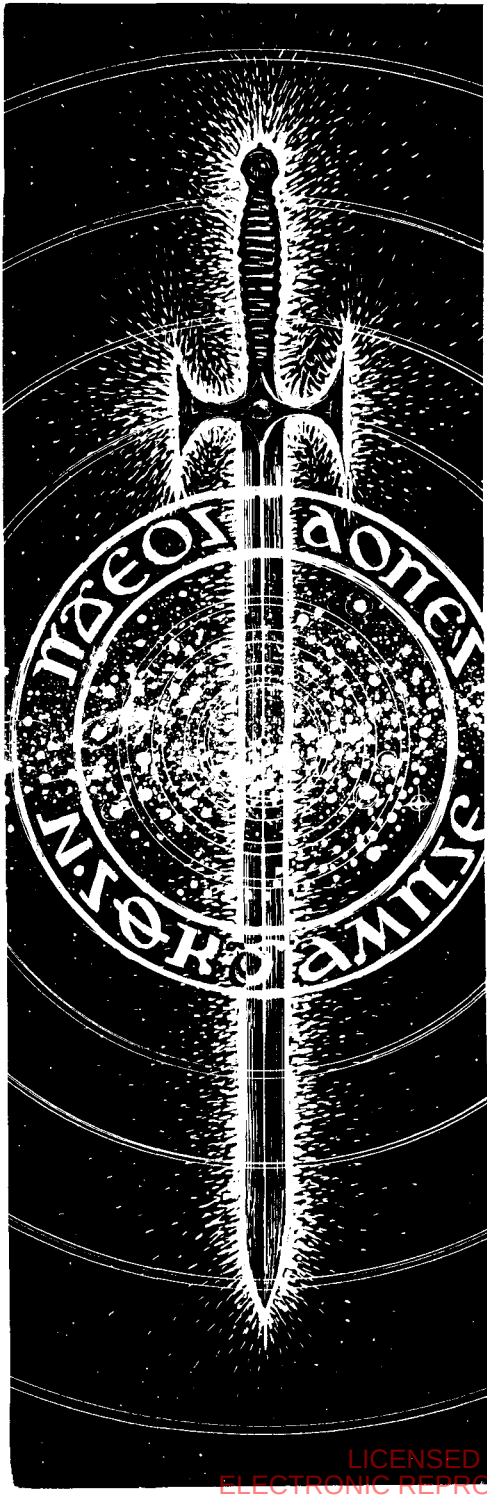
By that time of course, the structure and synthesis techniques were fairly widely known—it was in limited production.

It was then they discovered that, by sheer ill-chance, *every one of the laboratory men who had tried it happened to be one of the rare immunes!*

Heroin has, of course, proved to be the dope-pusher's ideal dream drug. The raw material—opium—is not readily available to the general public. (Differs from LSD in that.) The synthesis from opium is complex, and requires skilled chemists, working with first-class laboratory equipment. This keeps the amateurs from lousing up the mar-

continued on page 176

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

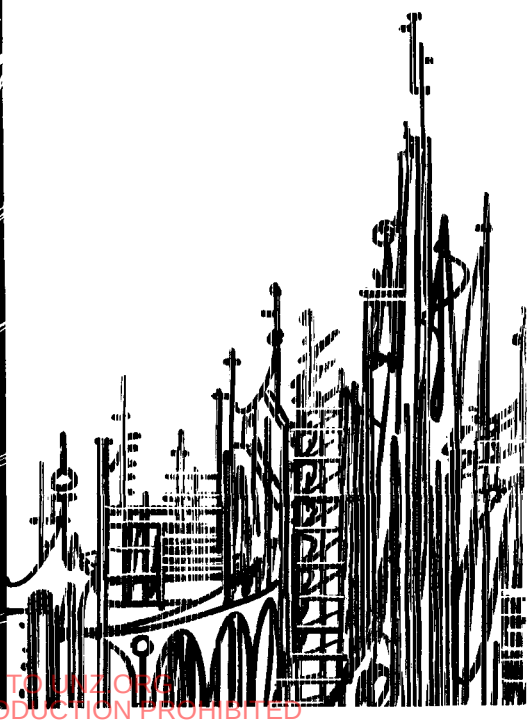


The King's Legions

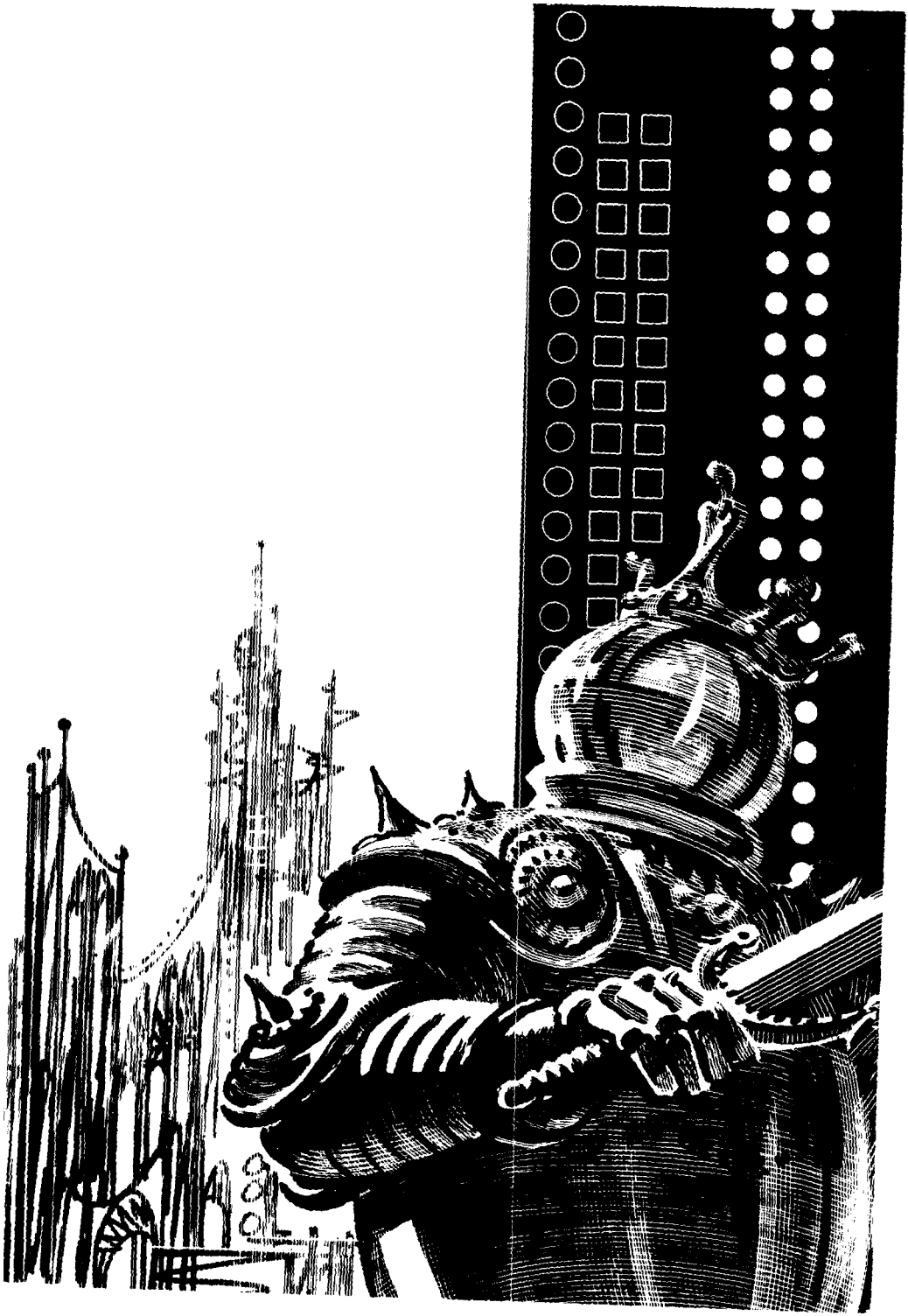
There is no more completely crushing surprise a man can experience than to discover that the hoax he's dreamed up—the wild and braggart claims he's made—is in cold fact essentially true! Except that his braggart claims underrated the actuality of power!

CHRISTOPHER ANVIL

Illustrated by Kelly Freas



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Vaughan Roberts, in the control seat of the salvaged Interstellar Patrol ship that had cost most of his life savings, glanced briefly at the battle screen, which showed his two friends' second-hand space yacht being hauled around in a gravitor beam. Then he looked back at the auxiliary screen, where an exaggeratedly military-looking individual, with the insignia of a lieutenant colonel, spoke in brisk authoritative tones:

"By order of the Commanding Officer, Squadron R, 876th Interstellar Combat Wing, Space Fleet XII, you are hereby commanded to halt for inspection re Exotic Drugs Act, Section 16 . . ."

Roberts, who had spent some time in the Space Force himself, had never before seen such a combination of meticulously close-cropped iron-gray hair, stiff face, and ramrod-straight posture, with uniform pressed into dentproof knife-edged creases. Over the left shirt pocket of this uniform were three rows of ribbons, and while Roberts did not recognize half of them, there was one that he knew to be the Cross of Space, with three stars. The Cross of Space was awarded sparingly—to win it required proof of heroism in the face of such danger that it was rare for the hero to come back alive. Try as he might, Roberts could not visualize the miracle that would enable the same man to win this award four times and live.

". . . Paragraph E," the stiffly-erect figure went on. "You will not resist the beam. You will not attempt to parley. You will open outer hatches to admit boarding parties without delay . . ."

Roberts glanced around.

The patrol ship, the purchase of which Roberts considered an unusual stroke of luck, was equipped with devices he could never have afforded to buy new. One of these could extrude a set of metal arms, to spin a shell of camouflage around the ship, hide its formidable armament, and create the appearance of a harmless rebuilt derelict. Other devices could make fast precise measurements of shape, size, mass, and other characteristics, to pass to computers which searched almost instantaneously through hosts of reference standards to determine what the data might mean. On this information, presented to the pilot in symbols on the battle screen, the patrol ship's battle computer could act at once, bringing the ship's weapons to bear on changing targets, and altering speed, course, and attitude to meet the situation. Presiding over the weapons, sensing elements, computers, and various special devices, and acting toward the pilot as a combination conscience and subconscious mind, was what was known as the "symbiotic computer." At this moment, the symbiotic computer, in its own way, was doubtless considering the rasping, authoritative voice:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

". . . You will at all times obey the instructions of the inspecting personnel. You will cooperate fully in exposing your ship to thorough search for contraband. Resistance, or procrastination, will be dealt with severely . . ."

But the many symbols now appearing on the battle screen were what riveted attention.

It gave Roberts pause to consider who would want such things as:

a) A large salvaged cruiser stripped for ultrafast acceleration.

b) An irregular rocky object some four hundred feet in diameter, hollowed out inside, with several large masses of undetermined nature floating around the interior.

c) A simulated Space Force dreadnought mocked up on a girder-ship frame.

d) An irregular metallic object eighty feet across, with fusion guns sunk in hidden wells.

Roberts fingered the curved surface of a small glowing ball recessed into the control console. As he turned the ball, a corresponding white circle on the battle screen moved from one symbol to the next, and each in turn was enlarged, to show fine detail. Roberts now saw such things as a big cargo section with what looked like severe damage; hidden inside were grapples to seize any ship that came close enough to give help.

Now it was clear why the "colonel" on the screen looked so exceptionally military. Real military men had work to do, and doing this work was their job. But this fellow's job was to look military. Where the fake-wreck artist collected his victims by drifting along a traveled route looking helpless; and where the trap-miner made his profit by maneuvering his chunk of "ore" into position to catch prospectors unaware; and where the slugger prospered by sudden attack—for the same purpose, the two-day wonder mimicked the Space Force.

Now the "colonel" was looking at Roberts with hard authority.

"Is that clearly understood?"

Roberts's course display now showed its line of big dashes drifting off to the right. The track display showed a curving line that wove past the asteroid belt to the stylized image of the blue-green world optimistically called Paradise—with the little image of the ship slipping well off the line. The battle screen showed the patrol ship caught in a wavy blur, representing another gravitor beam.

Roberts asked himself what all these commerce raiders were doing here. Two previous trips told him there wasn't enough commerce past this system to make a living for a tenth of them. If they weren't here to prey on commerce, what *were* they here for?

He considered one possible reason.

When he, Hammell and Morrissey had been on Paradise before,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Morrissey had invented a device to influence desires, and had developed it so it could be focused on a given place from a distance. Suppose someone had been shrewd enough to deduce, from what had happened, the existence of a want-generator?

What would a gang of commerce raiders do to get hold of a device that could influence desires from a distance?

But then, Roberts realized, if such a person had been on Paradise, he would have learned still more.

The last time Roberts, Hammell and Morrissey had been here, the only way they'd found to keep two of the planet's factions from slaughtering each other had been to use, not only the want-generator, but also Roberts's patrol ship, to create the myth of two *outside* factions fighting for control of the planet.

Now, Roberts asked himself, suppose the commerce raiders had learned of this myth, and of the formidable personages who were part of it. Would the commerce raiders care to tangle with such a crew? What if it should turn out that the creatures were real? What if Oggbad, the sorcerer, and the three Dukes *were* fighting for mastery of an Empire? Then what? The want-generator was worth taking on whoever had it, even if he was an armored Duke with an Empire behind him—but the risk should be spread by gathering a strong force, in case of trouble. That was how the commerce raiders would think.

While Roberts considered this, the imitation colonel gave signs of impatience.

"Let's have your attention here, Mister!"

The only way out Roberts could see was to convince the raiders the situation was too dangerous for them to handle. Yet, a simple calculation showed more firepower on their side.

It followed that Roberts would have to run a bluff.

On the screen, the two-day wonder's fuse burned short again, and he turned away, as if to rasp some order to an unseen subordinate.

Roberts spoke first: "This is a King's ship."

The "colonel" swung around. "What's that?"

Roberts looked the two-day wonder directly in the eye. "Sobeit you wish death, there is no surer way than this."

The two-day wonder stared at him.

Roberts spoke grimly: "A King's ship will not stand inspection by any mortal power in or out of space. He, who attempts it, will face the full might of the Empire. You are warned."

The figure on the screen momentarily congealed into a living statue. Then he leaned completely back out of focus of the screen.

There was a garbled noise from the speaker, then the automatic descramblers went to work, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

garble seemed to distort itself into new shapes and forms, and suddenly it came across, rough and low-pitched, but understandable: "Quick! Where's Maury?"

"Holed up with Parks and the lawyer. Why?"

"Get him on this screen!"

"Are you nuts? He'll—"

"I said, get him!"

The "colonel" reappeared, his manner conciliatory: "We certainly don't want to . . . er . . . detain a foreign ship against its will, Mr. . . . ah . . . ?"

In a chill voice, Roberts said, "My name is not at issue. Neither is it at issue whether you will hold this ship against its will. You lack the power to hold this ship against its will. You will release this ship or die. *That* is what is at issue."

In the silence that followed, Roberts became aware that, around him, there were a great many quiet noises. There was a hum, and a low clank from the weapons locker. From outside came grating and whirring sounds, and from somewhere forward there was a continuous murmuring rumble. The patrol ship, though it lacked room, had a trait that endeared it to Roberts: When trouble was coming, the patrol ship got ready. Its captain didn't have to concern himself with the little details any more than a man on the brink of a fist fight had to consciously raise his own blood pressure.

On the screen, the "colonel" glanced around. "Yes! Put him on!"

The screen divided vertically, to show an additional face. This new face took a cool glance at Roberts, and turned very slightly toward the imitation colonel. "What's all this about?"

"It's like that stuff down on Three! I grabbed this guy on a beam, and—"

"Are you wasting my time over a reel-in on some spacer punk? We'll talk about this lat—"

"No! Hold it, Maury! This is that Empire stuff!"

"Nuts. That's a rebuilt dogship. Look at your long-range screen and read the lines. Grow up."

"But, this guy—"

Roberts flipped a switch on the control panel.

There was a slight jar, and the outside viewscreen showed torn camouflage drifting past.

"You hold a King's ship at your peril."

Roberts reached for the firing console, but the symbiotic computer got there first, and the switches moved of their own accord. A large white beam sprang out from the patrol ship toward the asteroid belt.

In the asteroid belt, there was a dazzling explosion.

From a previously-unused speaker to the left of the instrument panel came a clear questioning voice: "Imperial Dreadnought *Coeur de Lion* to masked Imperial Ship *Nom de Guerre*. Do you need help?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

On another auxiliary screen appeared the image of a tough officer in glittering helmet and breastplate, with eyes of a blue so pale that they resembled ice.

It took Roberts an instant to realize that the symbiotic computer was filling in the details. Then he answered: "Imperial Ship *Nom de Guerre* to Imperial Dreadnought *Coeur de Lion*. We are detained by outspacers, who claim the right to halt and board us, in search for contraband."

"Outspacers? In what strength?"

"Fleet strength, of varying type and quality."

"Do the dogs know they hold a King's ship?"

"They do."

"Inform them that if they wish a fleet action, they shall have it."

"I have already told them. They doubt my word."

"Demand if the scum be leagued with Oggbad."

Roberts glanced back at the communications screen. The two-day wonder looked ready to shut his eyes and slide under the table anytime. The other individual, Maury, had a look of intense awareness.

Roberts looked him in the eye, and spoke in a tone suggesting the crack of a whip: "Serve you Oggbad the Fiend?"

Maury's brow wrinkled. His face took on the look of a rocket specialist grappling with his first gravitor. He opened his mouth, shut it, then opened it again. "No."

Roberts glanced at the auxiliary screen. "He denies allegiance to Oggbad."

"It is the policy of the Empire to avoid clashes with the outspacers till our present wounds be bound up. Warn this dog to stand clear of the Earldom-Designate of Paradise. Demand that he let loose his hold on you and the bomb ship. If he does so, take your departure. If not, run the iron down his throat."

"Have I leave to slam home the bomb ship?"

"Do that first. Then the rest will go quicker."

Roberts glanced back at Maury. Roberts's voice was brisk and businesslike: "I propose to you that you let loose my ships, and further that you agree to stand clear of the Earldom-Designate of Paradise, which is the third planet of this star, counting from the star outward. Do you agree?"

Maury, his expression baffled, said, "I agree."

Roberts turned back to the auxiliary screen. "He agrees."

The figure on the screen looked faintly disappointed. "If he does as promised, you have no choice but to break off. At some future time, we may settle these old accounts."

Roberts watched the battle screen. The wavy blurs vanished. The patrol ship and the space yacht were free.

Roberts nodded coldly to Maury.

Maury, his expression that of a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

person thinking very hard, nodded back.

Roberts broke the connection.

So far, so good. But one careless slip would unravel the whole illusion.

Roberts made certain the communicator was off, thought a moment, then tapped a button beside the glowing amber lens marked "Smb Cmp."

"Any fishnet pickups between us and the space yacht?"

The voice of the symbiotic computer replied, "Two. They were drifted out on narrow pressor elements of a compound beam. They're in position between here and the yacht."

"Fishnet pickups are expensive. If we don't hurt them, our friends in the asteroid belt will pull them back *in* again when we leave. If—"

The symbiotic computer spoke complacently. "The parasite circuits are already in place."

"Good. Let's see these fishnets on the screen."

The outside viewscreen promptly showed, outlined in red, two large fuzzy networks of fine lines, between the space yacht and the patrol ship.

"O.K.," said Roberts, and carefully guided the patrol ship away from them, as if he were moving off on his own. When he reached an angle that would avoid the pickups, he switched on the communicator, and called the yacht on a tight beam.

Hammell and Morrissey appeared on the screen, their faces tense.

Roberts said, "Don't talk. Just follow me."

Hammell nodded, and Roberts snapped off the screen.

The patrol ship moved slowly off, and the space yacht swung slowly after it.

Carefully, Roberts watched the battle screen for any sign of trouble. When nothing developed, he glanced down at the course display, and sent the little symbol of the ship gradually angling back toward the line of red dashes. As he moved, Roberts gathered speed, so that not long after the symbol of the ship was again centered on the display's dashes, the dashes themselves faded to pale pink, then white. The ship was now back on course, and moving at the correct speed.

The asteroid belt by now was far behind.

But all the way down to the planet, Roberts could see Maury's face—thinking, weighing, calculating.

The landing itself was no problem. The two ships slid down through heavy clouds, moved low over dense forest, and came to rest a little before sunset in the same clearing where they'd set down before.

Roberts ran the stabilizer feet out, switched off the gravitors, and unbuckled his safety harness. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ducked under the three-foot-thick shiny cylinder that ran down the axis of the ship, and went up several steps in the cramped aft section. He released the clamp on the outer hatch, spun the lockwheel counterclockwise, pulled the hatch lever down cautiously, and peered out a one-inch slit. Past experience told him that to actually *go* outside, without battle armor, might be to wind up instantaneously in some creature's digestive tract. But after all the time he'd spent in the ship, he wanted a breath of fresh air.

As the hatch eased up, he peered out into the clearing, sniffed the cool fresh air, inhaled deeply, sighed with pleasure, raised the hatch further, felt the breeze on his face—

There was the faint tick of an automatic turret.

WHAP!

A blur of yellow fur and claws blew apart in mid air.

Roberts shook his head, shut the hatch, and went to the nearest weapons locker to get battle armor. He opened the locker, and out on its sling came a glittering metal suit with a tall tapering spire on the helmet, a gauzy pink cloth on the spire, and a dazzling coat of arms on the breastplate.

Again, to fit the part Roberts was playing, the patrol ship had "improved" the armor.

Roberts looked at it irritatedly, and tried another locker. Out came a more dazzling suit, with spire plus flashing crown on the helmet, and a larger broadsword in a lavishly jeweled scabbard.

Roberts tried the other two lockers—which stubbornly refused to open.

The voice of the symbiotic computer said dryly, "When playing a part, little inconsistencies add up to a big loss of belief."

"Exactly who," said Roberts, "is going to watch me go this short distance?"

"Those who are not seers should avoid predicting the future."

"Nuts." Roberts climbed into the armor, and made his way to the hatch. He turned backwards, head bent, and managed to get the hatch open without ramming anything with the spire. He crouched, turned around, aimed the spire out the opening, followed it through, and dropped to the ground. The hatch clanged shut behind him, and Roberts started for the space yacht.

About halfway there, he became conscious of a face back in the shadows, watching him with awe. Roberts corrected himself—watching the *armor* with awe.

That the symbiotic computer had been right again did nothing to improve Roberts's frame of mind—especially since he could now see that it was obvious. The accumulated effects of the want-generator had led thousands from the city to venture deeper into the forest, seeking adventure and trophies, and the most capable survivors might by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

now be on an almost equal footing with the creatures that naturally lived there.

Roberts climbed up the handholds of the yacht, and banged on the big cargo door. At once it swung open. Roberts used the spire to keep Hammell back, and as soon as he was inside, jabbed the button that swung the door shut.

"Ye gods," said Hammell, staring at the armor, "let's not bother with *that* until we need it. Incidentally, you almost stabbed me with that helmet spike when you came in."

Roberts said shortly, "There's somebody watching from the edge of the clearing. Don't forget, we've got a lot of these people interested in going into the forest. That's what they're doing."

Hammell momentarily had the foolish expression of one caught overlooking the obvious.

"Moreover," said Roberts, "I was using that spike to keep you away from the hatch. You don't look too much like Duke Ewald of Greme right now." He hesitated, then cleared his throat. "When you're playing a part, little inconsistencies add up to a big loss of belief. You want to remember that."

Hammell looked groggy. "I should have thought of it, but for some reason, I forgot."

Roberts said cheerfully, "Where's Morrissey?"

"Up on the fifth level, checking the gear."

"You'd better go up first. We don't want him to get speared with this helmet spike."

"O.K."

Hammell stepped onto the green half of the glowing oval on the deck, and drifted up the grav-lift. The doors overhead slid open and shut, and he was gone from sight.

Roberts allowed time to warn Morrissey, then followed. The doors slid open one after another, then the fifth level dropped into view, and Roberts gripped the handhold and pulled himself out.

Hammell and Morrissey were standing by a wide improvised control panel. Roberts said hello to Morrissey, got out of the armor, and glanced around.

"How are things in the city?"

"That's a good question," said Morrissey. "There's no broadcast from the city, and the spy screen doesn't work."

Roberts glanced at the blank gray screen. "Can you fix it?"

"If it was something wrong with the screen *itself*, maybe. But I tried a test transmission, and the screen's O.K. The trouble is, there's no transmission from the city."

"What would cause that?"

Morrissey shrugged. "If we had our own spy devices in the city, I might be in a position to say. But this setup is tapped onto the city's own surveillance system. Now, how does that system work? If the city's general power supply fails, does the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

system fail? If so, it could be that they've had a power failure. Or, it could be that the power supply is O.K., but that somebody has knocked out the surveillance system itself. Not knowing how the system works, I don't know what's possible."

"Could the technicians have found out someone had tapped the surveillance system?"

Morrissey nodded. "Among other things. It could even be that there's a gentleman's agreement that the system will only be used during certain hours. All I *know* is the screen doesn't show us anything, because there's no transmission to pick up."

Roberts shook his head. "What we're here for is to use the want-generator to straighten out the mess in that city. But how can we use it, when there's no way to watch the effect? Moreover, we've got this fleet of commerce raiders. How do we concentrate on what we're doing with a troop of baboons ready to drop in anytime?"

Hammell said, "It's worse than that. The odds are, they've got at least one agent already *on* the planet. Any time we make a public move, this guy will report it."

Morrissey frowned. "Come to think of it, they'll be able to use their instruments to follow the movements of our ships here. Then they can compare what we *say*, as reported by their agent, with what we *do*, as shown by their instruments. We can't say we're going off to fight Oggbad, for instance, and then just land our ships out of sight while we decide what to do next."

"No," said Hammell, "they'd know we were faking."

"And we can't afford *that*," said Roberts.

Morrissey said, "The wonder is that we ever got away from them at all. How did you work it?"

Roberts described what had happened, adding, "I'd think it was a pretty good bluff if we were far away by now. But since we aren't, our safety depends on keeping them afraid to try anything, for fear the mighty Empire will blow them to bits."

"Which," Hammell growled, "means every move we make not only has to make sense for our purposes, but also has got to be convincing to the commerce raiders."

"Correct," said Roberts.

Morrissey, scowling, said, "This is going to complicate things."

"When you consider the likely situation on this planet," said Roberts, "it's going to pile up complications to the point where it's a question whether we can move at all. Just think of the factions here. There's the planetary computer with its roboid devices and built-in directives. As a sort of semi-independent extension, there's Kelty and his army of roboid police. There's the technicians, and the machines and devices the technicians have made. Then there's the Great Leader and his fanatics—plus the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

general bulk of the populace itself. On top of all this is the effect of the measures *we* took while we were here the last time. And, of course, the whole thing is bound to have developed since then, even though we won't know *how* until we get the spy screen to work."

Morrissey nodded moodily. "And since the trouble is on the other end, there isn't much we can do."

There was a moody silence.

Out in the clearing, it was getting dim, and Roberts absently tapped the switch to opaque the portholes, lest they be watched from outside. Then the silence stretched out again.

Finally Hammell said, "There ought to be *some* way to simplify this."

Morrissey nodded. "Sure. What?"

Roberts was about to suggest, yet again, that they move into the patrol ship, where at least, their skins would be safe. But just then—

BAM!

The ship jumped underfoot.

Roberts instantaneously dove for his battle armor.

There was a rapid series of jolts and heavy crashes. Something clattered on the deck, hissed, spun, and bounced, in a blur of escaping mist.

Roberts heaved open the backplate.

Hammell and Morrissey, caught in the mist, stumbled toward the grav-lift, and were lost in swirling grayness.

Roberts squirmed into the armor, his eyes shut, and holding his breath. But even though he was now inside, so was a certain amount of gas. He staggered to his feet, swung shut the backplate, groped for the emergency-breathing chin-lever, couldn't find it, and suddenly, despite himself, his straining lungs sucked in a little breath of air that smelled sweetish and strange.

Roberts's thoughts vanished like startled fish. There was a gap when he was aware of nothing at all, and then he was standing, stuporous and empty-minded, as there appeared through the fog, from the direction of the grav-lift, a heavily-armed figure wearing an armored suit with wide transparent faceplate, flexible air hose looped over the left shoulder, and speaking diaphragm in the side of the mouthpiece.

From somewhere down in the clearing, an amplified voice boomed out:

"YOU ARE UNDER ARREST! BY ORDER OF THE PLANETARY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, YOU MUST EVACUATE THESE SHIPS AND COME OUT DISARMED AND WITH YOUR HANDS CLASPED BEHIND YOUR HEADS! YOU HAVE FIFTEEN SECONDS TO COMPLY WITH THIS ORDER!"

A second armored figure loomed through the fog. The two figures bent, and carried Hammell and Morrissey below.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A third figure came in, peered around, stepped forward, looked straight toward Roberts, and froze.

Another armored figure, and another, came in the grav-shaft, peered through the fog toward Roberts, and suddenly stood motionless.

Roberts, aware of an urgent need to act, at the same time was unable to remember who or where he was. All he really knew was that he was standing still, breathing in air that smelled slightly less sweet at every breath. Then, dimly, he caught the tail end of a train of thought, struggled to hold it, sucked in a great breath of air, and in a blinding flash the situation was clear to him.

He fought off a host of other thoughts and kept his mind riveted on that one thought that clarified the whole situation:

I am Vaughan, Duke of Trasimere, Prince Contestant to the Throne. This planet is the Earldom-Designate of Paradise. Its every inhabitant is rightly subject to my command, save only Oggbad, the sorcerer.

That was straightforward.

Once Roberts knew who he was, everything simplified itself wonderfully.

Alertly, he studied the armored figures edging toward him. The expressions of fear and awe visible through their faceplates suggested that they were not ill-intentioned. What had happened, then?

In a kindly voice, with the natural overtones of power and authority that followed from a knowledge of who he was, Roberts said quietly: "Kneel to your liege-lord."

The armored figures, wide-eyed, dropped to one knee.

This told Roberts that the men were not from off the planet, but from the city, and were acquainted with what had happened on his last visit, when the sorcerer Oggbad had escaped into the wilderness, and the leaders and population of the city, after a little unseemly wavering, had rallied to the true cause. Their allegiance once pledged, and his power to reward and punish once established, they would not readily turn against him.

With a tinge of regret and a hint of sternness in his voice, Roberts said quietly, "What brings you here?"

Nobody dared to speak, and now Roberts said, "I must have an answer. Rise. Was it Oggbad?"

They stumbled to their feet. But still no one could bring himself to speak.

Roberts now noticed that the armored suits bore the words, "Citizens' Defense Force." One of the armored suits bore the chevrons of a sergeant.

Roberts's voice became sharper. "Before this evil can be destroyed, I must know its source. Let whoever is of highest rank among you answer my questions. Did Oggbad send you here?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The sergeant looked around, but there was no one else to do it. He said, "No, your . . . your highness. A man landed in a . . . ah . . . official Planetary Development Authority ship, and announced that we'd been tricked, and he was taking over the planet. He had an army of . . . 'administrators' . . . with him. They're all over the Inner City. He gives the orders. We didn't know *you* were here."

"This fellow is an outspacer?"

"He . . . ah—?"

"He does not belong to the Empire?"

"No."

"Then he is an outspacer and has no right here. Did this fellow come with you?"

"Yes, he—"

"Is he in this ship?"

"He's outside, at the loudspeaker. There he goes now."

The amplified voice boomed out: ". . . AT ONCE, OR WE WILL DESTROY BOTH OF THESE SHIPS AND . . ."

Roberts nodded. "Go below, and warn your companions that I shall be down to settle this shortly."

The men went out.

Roberts, breathing air that the suit had now cleared almost entirely of the fumes, was having more and more trouble fighting off a throng of distracting thoughts that conflicted with his new-found clarity of mind. He took a few moments to shove these thoughts out of his consciousness. There would be time enough for all that later. The main thing *now* was to take care of this officious usurper.

With this purpose clearly in mind, Roberts checked sword and gun, and stepped into the grav-shaft.

A throng of armored men moved back respectfully as Roberts walked to the cargo door to look down into the clearing.

Below, some eighty to a hundred heavily armed men nervously ringed the patrol ship. Closer to the patrol ship, redly-glowing fragments lay like driftwood marking high water at a beach. The larger turrets of the ship aimed straight ahead, as if disdaining such petty opponents, but the smaller turrets made little adjustments that served as warnings to come no closer.

Floodlights, mounted on dish-shaped grav-skimmers, lit the scene, which was given an inferno aspect by a thin mist blowing across the clearing from a ring of generators around the edge. Through the upper reaches of this mist, hosts of bats with glistening teeth dove at the clearing, but then with desperate twists and turns flitted away again.

Between the patrol ship and the space yacht stood a little cluster of figures beside a loudspeaker aimed at the patrol ship. One of these armored men spoke into a microphone, and his words boomed out: ". . . AND I *REPEAT*—YOU WILL SURRENDER AT ONCE OR BE DECLARED OUTLAWS,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SUBJECT TO ATTACK ON SIGHT, FORFEITURE OF ALL PROPERTY AND ASSETS, AND DENIAL OF RIGHT OF ENTRY AT ALL CIVILIZED . . ."

His tone of voice spoke of close familiarity with rules and regulations, accompanied by a dim understanding of human nature. It came to Roberts that even if the fellow had any power over him, his conclusion would be the same:

Better dead than that man's prisoner.

The loudspeaker was now blaring the words:

". . . THEREFORE, BY THE AUTHORITY VESTED IN ME, I HEREBY . . ."

Roberts suddenly had enough. The suit amplified his words into a voice of thunder:

"MASTER OF THE ORDNANCE! SILENCE THAT DOG!"

From the patrol ship, a bright line of light reached out to the loudspeaker. There was a brief display of sparks, then a pleasant quiet.

Beside the loudspeaker, the man with the microphone swung around. "Take *that* man prisoner!"

Roberts rested his hand on his sword hilt.

No one moved.

Roberts studied the usurper coldly. "What false illusion of power emboldens a fool to challenge the true liege-lord of this world?"

The only sound was the murmur of wind and the hiss of the generators spaced around the clearing.

Then the armed men in the clearing were grinning at the little group by the loudspeaker.

The individual in the center, firmly gripping the useless microphone, spoke in a determined voice. "I am P. W. Glinderen, Chief of Planet. Owing to the . . . spectacular irregularities . . . which have taken place on this planet, the Planetary Development Authority has regressed the planet to pre-provisional status. I have duly and officially been appointed Chief. You are evidently the cause of the irregularities. I, therefore, place you under arrest, and instruct you to strip yourself at once of all weapons and armor, open this other ship to immediate inspection, and instruct those within to come out at once, disarm themselves, and surrender. If you carry out these instructions promptly, I believe I can endorse a plea for clemency in your case."

Roberts replied irritatedly: "No one can enforce his will where he lacks both right and power. The rulers of this world have yielded to me. Your vaunted authority is either fraudulent or void."

P. W. Glinderen opened his mouth, shut it, and then spoke determinedly:

"In other words, you admit to planetary piracy? You state that you have seized this planet by force?"

Roberts spoke as if to a child: "Is the authority of lord over vassal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

based on force alone? Better to die, than to yield to such a claim, and better never to seize such a perilous allegiance. None need yield to a foul or empty cause. Against such, there is the appeal to Heaven, which will grant victory or apportion vengeance."

P. W. Glinderen began to speak, looked thoughtful, and tried again:

"May I ask if your name is not —"he leaned over to another of his party, listened, nodded, and said, "—Vaughan N. Roberts, and if not, what *is* your exact identity?"

The question caused Roberts a moment of uneasiness. But one who has lost his identity, and then recovered it, is none too eager to let it go a second time. Roberts's voice came out with anger and conviction:

"To question another in this manner assumes a superiority dangerous to one who is, in fact, a trespasser, without right or power, and with his life in the hands of him he seeks to question. You ask my name. I am Vaughan, Duke of Trasimere. Seek you any *further* answers?"

The Planetary Development official stared at Roberts, then again gathered himself to speak.

A loud ticking sounded from the patrol ship.

Someone in Glinderen's party looked around, then urgently grabbed Glinderen.

The patrol ship's big fusion cannon aimed directly at him.

Glinderen opened his mouth, and tried to speak, but was unable to get any words out.

Roberts turned to the men who had surrounded the patrol ship and were now gathered between the patrol ship and the space yacht.

"Take this man and his fellows prisoner, and return them to the city. Give warning that I shall soon be there to set straight whatever folly these people have brought about."

The armored men below enthusiastically seized Glinderen and his companions, and hustled them onto the grav-skimmers. Then the men on the space yacht asked for orders, and Roberts sent them off with the rest. The whole outfit roared away with impressive efficiency, taking prisoners, loudspeakers, floodlights, and mist-generators with them.

Roberts, with the feeling of having satisfactorily completed an unpleasant task, turned to see Hammell and Morrissey, holding pressure-bottles and masks to their faces, watching him wide-eyed.

At that instant, with the tension relaxed and Roberts himself off guard, suddenly the thoughts he'd held off burst into consciousness.

Vaughan, Duke of Trasimere, Prince Contestant to the Throne, suddenly realized with a shock what was myth and what reality.

Morrissey held the mask away for a moment.

"Was that PDA Chief a fake—I hope?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hammell added nervously: "The whole Space Force will come out on a planetary-piracy charge." He sucked a fresh breath through the mask. "You know that, don't you?"

Now Roberts knew it. Now that he had, in effect, challenged the whole human-occupied universe to war.

Then something more immediately urgent occurred to him.

"Once the fumes from the generators blow away, those gangbats will be down here, and no one knows what else. The yacht's hull is riddled. You'd better be in the patrol ship before it's too late."

For once, Hammell and Morrissey made no objection, but hastily followed him down the handholds and across the clearing.

The instant they were inside, Roberts slammed shut the hatch and locked it tight.

Now, he thought, he would have to answer some awkward questions.

But already, the two weapons lockers, that Roberts had been unable to open, were swinging wide. Glittering suits of battle armor traveled out on their slings.

"The new recruits," said the symbiotic computer, "will suit up at once, and return to the yacht to gather necessary goods and equipment."

Hammell and Morrissey stared at the two glittering suits of battle armor.

"New recruits?" said Morrissey.

Roberts said reassuringly, "Don't worry about that. That's just how it talks. But you'd better go along with it; otherwise you don't get any food or water, and the bunk stays locked in place and you wind up having to sleep on the deck. But never mind that. We've got to get the want-generator over here anyway. Not only could animals damage it, but conceivably somebody might get at it while we're away."

"Away?" said Hammell. "Where are we going?"

"Where do you think?" said Roberts. "There's only one place to straighten out this mess, and that's the city."

Hammell and Morrissey got into the battle armor without a word. But they looked as if they were doing a good deal of thinking.

Transferring the want-generator and spy screen to the patrol ship took the better part of two hours, but things didn't stand still while they did it. At intervals they could hear, on the patrol ship's communicator, the voice of Kelty, in charge of the city's roboid police; the voice of the redbearded spokesman for the technicians; and the voice used by the planetary computer itself. On the other side was a harsh demanding voice that wrung the facts from stammering humans and toneless computer, and made it plain that everyone on the planet would obey his liege-lord the Duke, or his liege-lord the Duke would smash the place into smoldering rubble.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Once the want-generator and spy screen were set up, the three men got out of their armor and considered the restricted space in the patrol ship.

Standing near the hatch looking forward, the most prominent feature was the glistening three-foot-thick cylinder that ran down the axis of the ship, creating a shimmer of reflections exactly where anyone would naturally walk. Hammell and Morrissey had already banged into it, and now moved more warily.

To the left of this cylinder was the control seat and console, forward of which was a blank wall. To the right of the cylinder, the space was now cluttered with the spy screen and want-generator, while straight ahead the deck itself warped sharply upward over the missile bay.

Aft of where Roberts stood, everything was constricted. Between the cylinder and the various drive and fuel-storage units, there was little but a set of claustrophobic crawl spaces so tight that it was necessary to exhale to get in.

Beside Roberts, however, was one of the patrol ship's better features. Whatever might be said about other details, the final maddening touch—cramped sleeping arrangements—had been left out. The bunks were large and comfortable, and once in his bunk, a man could stretch out for a full night's rest. But there was no denying, most of the ship lacked space.

Hammell and Morrissey, after looking around, glanced at each other, and then Hammell turned to Roberts accusingly.

"It's even smaller on the inside than on the outside."

Roberts was listening to the symbiotic computer warn Kelty that Glinderen's party shouldn't be allowed to use a communicator. Roberts replied absently. "It's a thick hull."

"Maybe so, but . . . what's behind that?" Hammell pointed to the wall that took up the space in front of the control console.

Roberts frowned. "At first, I thought it was some kind of a storeroom. But I've never been able to find any way into it."

Hammell said, "That looks like the edge of a sliding door, in front of the control console."

"When you're at the controls during an attack, that door slides shut. If the ship out here is holed, you can still function."

Morrissey looked around. "What's under the deck here?"

Roberts bent, and heaved back a section. Underneath was a tangle of tubes, cables, and freely-curving pipes, of various sizes and colors, smoothly branching and reconnecting, some sinking out of sight beneath the others, and the whole works set into a pinkish jellylike insulation or sealant of some kind. As they watched, a translucent pipe about the size of a man's forearm began to dilate. In a series of waves

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of contraction and dilatation, ball-like lumps of something with a golden glint traveled along, to vanish under the next section of deck.

Roberts lowered the panel, and glanced at Morrissey. "Any more questions?"

Morrissey scratched his head, but said nothing.

Hammell looked around in puzzlement. "This seems to be pretty advanced." He stepped forward and glanced up through an opening overhead.

"Is there another deck up there?"

"No. That's the upper fusion turret."

"What's that . . . ah . . . thing like a wheel, with a handle—"

"The handwheel for elevating the gun."

Hammell blinked. "You aim the gun by hand?"

"There's a multiple control system. The gun can be operated by the battle computer or the symbiotic computer, with no one on board. Or, you can operate it yourself from the control console. But if you have to, you can also do it completely by hand."

"Which has precedence, the manual control, or the automatic?"

"So far as the guns are concerned, I think the manual. Where the flying of the ship is concerned, the computers can lock you out anytime. It's not that the manual controls are disconnected, or don't work, but that they take a setting and you can't move them. If a man were strong enough, I don't know what would happen."

Morrissey said, "What about the communicator?"

"Same thing as the flying controls, except that if you're around, at least you know what's going on. You can hear what the symbiotic computer is saying. The computer can *take off* in the ship, and unless you happen to hear the slide and click of the levers and switches, you won't even know what happened."

Hammell looked around, and squinted at the bulkhead, or reinforced section of hull, or whatever it was, in front of the control console.

"I'll bet that symbiotic computer is in there. It's the logical place. You're on one side of the controls. It's on the other."

Morrissey shook his head. "Too vulnerable. The same hit might knock out pilot and computer both."

"Where is it then?"

Morrissey pointed at the deck.

Hammell shook his head. "There's a symmetry about having it on the other side of the control console. If it's heavily enough protected, that business about the same hit wouldn't count. And it would make it easier to—"

Just then, Roberts heard the communicator say, ". . . Preparations had best be complete to receive His Royal and Imperial High-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ness, the Duke Vaughan, at the Barons Council Hall within the quarter hour. Your own head will answer for it if aught traceable to you goes wrong. His Highness is in no sweet mood after what happened here a few hours ago . . ."

"O.K.," said Roberts. "Here we go."

Hammell and Morrissey, tied up in their argument, looked surprised.

"Wait a minute," said Hammell, "what are we going to *do?*"

Roberts pulled his battle armor out on its sling. "The only place we can straighten the mess out—or even find out what's going on—is in the city. So, we have to go to the city."

"Yes, but what do we *do* there?"

"We've got to simplify the situation. There are too many factions. It's like trying to go somewhere with half a dozen different pilots, each backing his own flight plan. We've got to simplify it. The only way I can see is for us to get control of the major factions ourselves."

Hammell shook his head. "That would have been fine—before Glinderen showed up. He's the Chief of Planet."

Roberts frowned. "I don't think Glinderen, or anyone else who approaches this planet on a routine basis, can ever hope to straighten things out. I don't see any way to unite these factions unless *we* do it."

Morrissey said, "Suppose we *do* unite the factions? Suppose we throw out Glinderen? Suppose we end the fighting? Suppose we scare off Maury and his fleet of commerce raiders? Suppose we even get halfway started on the job of straightening out this place? Then what? P. W. Glinderen merely goes offplanet, and signals his report to PDA Sector Headquarters; PDA Sector HQ then notifies Space Force Sector HQ and the Colonization Council; Space Force Sector HQ says it's overburdened and calls for reinforcements; that call gets to Space Force GHQ at the same time as an urgent recommendation from the Colonization Council; Space Force GHQ sends out the orders for a reserve fleet to come in here; meanwhile, Glinderen brushes his teeth, takes a shower, slides in between the cool sheets, and sleeps the sleep of the just; down here, so far as any court in the known universe is concerned, *we* are planetary pirates. One fine day, the Space Force sets down, and we either give up or get blasted into molten slag. Glinderen comes back down here, and methodically undoes everything we've done, and puts it back together *his* way. Where's the gain?"

Hammell nodded. "That's what I mean."

Roberts silently got into his armor, then glanced at the instrument panel.

"Here's an example of what I mean. While we've been talking, the ship has taken off. We're almost there."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Morrissey said urgently, "Look, Glinderen has us on the horns of a dilemma. If we *don't* give up, the Space Force kills us. If we *do* give up, *he* imprisons us. I don't want to get gored. But if I have to, I'll pick the shorter horn."

Roberts checked fusion gun and sword. "You say the Space Force can finish us off. That's provided Glinderen notifies them. What if he gets no chance to do it? That horn breaks off."

Morrissey blinked, and, frowning, started getting into his armor; but Hammell looked worried.

"Let's not get out of a *false* charge of piracy by carrying out actual piracy. Glinderen is lawfully in charge here."

A sliding sound from the direction of the control console, and a quiet alteration in the tone of the gravitors, told them that they were starting down.

Roberts said quietly, "You're overlooking something."

Hammell said, with considerable strain in his voice, "I don't know what. Glinderen's authority is real. I don't like to do it, but this has gone far enough. I'll have to go to Glinderen, and—"

The voice of the symbiotic computer said, "We are now landing at Paradise City." The voice added, with the rasp of a drill instructor, "If the recruit standing with one hand on his armor will kindly put it on, this operation will proceed. If not, we will carry out disciplinary action now, and the recruit will spend the next five days aft cleaning out the maintenance tunnels."

Roberts said, *"That's* what you've overlooked. This is an Interstellar Patrol ship. The Interstellar Patrol is famous for its justice and incorruptibility. The symbiotic computer wouldn't even let the ship be sold until it was satisfied the buyer had the right moral standards. Would it let us do this if we were doing wrong?"

Even as he spoke, Roberts saw the flaw in his argument.

But Hammell, with an expression of profound relief, got into the battle armor.

The Barons Council Hall, near which the patrol ship landed, was floodlit and surrounded by roboid police and heavily-armed members of the Citizens Defense Force. More roboid police rolled up to form a double line, with narrow lane between, from the ship to the Council Hall.

The patrol ship promptly blew up the nearest roboid police, and blasted to bits those that tried to take their place.

Roberts, coming out the hatch, decided that what looked fishy to the patrol ship looked fishy to him. He drew his sword.

As Hammell and Morrissey came out, he called: "Be on your guard. This has a look I like not."

The two men, in glittering armor, whipped out their fusion guns.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The roboid police eased a trifle further apart.

Roberts, studying the Citizens Defense Force, observed that no one was faced *out*, to guard the site. They were all faced *in*.

Roberts strolled into the narrow lane between the roboid police. "Draw these lines apart!"

The roboid police backed up an inch.

With one violent blow of his sword, Roberts sliced the nearest roboid policeman in half. He chopped the next one apart, hewed his way through the third—

Suddenly there was room around him.

He strode between the lines toward the Council Hall, then abruptly came to a halt. Ahead and a little to his left, where he would have had to step if he had gone between the original lines, was what *looked* like a repaired place in the concrete.

Roberts drew his fusion gun, aimed deliberately, and fired.

A geyser of flame roared up. Chunks of concrete shot skyward like the discharge of a volcano.

From the patrol ship, searing shafts of energy reached out. There was a sizzling multiple *Crack!* like a dozen thunderbolts striking at once.

The roboid police were two lines of glowing wreckage.

Roberts jumped the smoking crater, and headed for the building. On the way, he shot down a large sign that proclaimed, "Municipal Detention Center," uncovering the more solidly anchored plaque bearing the words, "Barons Council Hall." Roberts kicked the fallen sign out of his way, and opened the door.

At the near end of a big table, two men came to their feet. They were Kelty, the lean, well-dressed assistant chief of the planetary computer's roboid police, and the redbearded giant who was spokesman for the technicians. At the foot of the table sat P. W. Glinderen, and to his right a knowing cynical individual who looked at Roberts with a smirk. Beside this individual was a bored-looking man with broad shoulders and a detectable bulge in his armpit. To Glinderen's left were seated several neatly-dressed smooth-shaven men who apparently were administrators of some kind.

Roberts stepped to the empty place at the head of the table, and pulled out the chair.

Hammell and Morrissey took their places to Roberts's right, but, as he remained standing, they, too, stayed on their feet. At the far end, Glinderen and the officials to his left methodically glanced over papers, while to Glinderen's right, the shrewd-looking individual eyed Roberts, Hammell and Morrissey with a knowing smile.

Hammell's voice remarked, "Your Grace, I like not the air of this rabble at the foot of the table.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They should stand till you are seated."

Glinderen looked up.

"*You* are at the foot of the table. And let me warn you, before you try any theatrical display, that I have notified the Space Force, and the three of you will be in prison before the week is out." His voice changed to a whiplike crack. "Now, sit *down*."

Roberts, aware of the orders he had earlier heard the symbiotic computer give, knew that Glinderen was not to have been allowed the use of a communicator.

Roberts glanced at Kelty. "Is this true?"

Kelty nodded unhappily. "I tried to stop him. But Glinderen convinced the planetary computer, and it blocked me."

Roberts said coldly, "Then this means war. Their so-called Space Force is in the asteroid belt. If it attempts to interfere with this world, I shall summon the battle fleets of the Empire."

At the other end of the table, the crafty individual to Glinderen's right laughed silently.

As Roberts contemplated this low point in his plans, Hammell's voice reached him:

"Your Grace, I know that these outspacers have customs different from ours. But their bearing is an insult. Not alone to Trasimere and the Empire, but to Malafont and Greme as well."

Roberts looked at the individuals at the far end of the table. Glinderen and his officials were ignoring everyone else. To Glinderen's right, the crafty individual sat back and grinned, while to *his* right, the tough was studying Hammell as if he were a peculiar kind of insect. No one at the far end of the table was taking Roberts and his party seriously. Moreover, they now controlled the planetary computer, and they had already called the Space Force.

Hammell's voice was courteous but firm:

"I know, Your Grace, of your desire to avoid conflict with the outspacers while our own struggles are yet unsettled. Nevertheless, Your Grace, I respectfully call to your attention that this world is yours, and that I am your *guest* upon it."

The shrewd individual rocked back in his chair, grinning.

Roberts said politely, "If the gentleman to Mr. Glinderen's right belongs to Mr. Glinderen's party, I trust that Mr. Glinderen will call him to order while there is yet time for Mr. Glinderen to call him to order."

Glinderen glanced up, frowning. "Mr. Peen is a commercial representative for Krojac Enterprises. He is entirely—"

"I see," said Roberts.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mr. Peen went into a fresh fit of silent laughter.

Through no volition of his own, the fusion gun jumped to Roberts' hand. A dazzling lance of energy reached across the table.

Glinderen and his aides sprang to their feet as Peen went over backwards.

Roberts heard his own voice say coolly, "I apologize to their Grace of Malafont and Greme for this incivility."

Hammell's voice said, "The stain is wiped away, Your Grace."

Morrissey's voice added coolly, "Say no more of it, Your Grace. However, that other fellow, also to the right of Glinderen, hath a look which I care not for."

Roberts's voice inquired politely: "That second gentleman, Mr. Glinderen, is of your party?"

Glinderen said, "No, no! He's Mr. Peen's—"

Crack!

The second gentleman, springing to his feet and yanking a short-barreled weapon from his armpit, collapsed on the floor.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Roberts's voice said coolly, "I apologize to His Grace of Malafont, for this unpleasantness."

Morrissey's voice said cheerfully, "The unpleasantness is transmuted to pleasure, Your Grace."

As a matter of fact, the sudden departure of the grinning pair was a relief to Roberts. But the way they had departed was something else again. To see whether he now had control, or whether the battle armor was just going to operate on its own from now on, Roberts said experimentally, "Let us be seated."

The words were dutifully reproduced by the armor. He sat down, and Hammell, Morrissey, Kelty, and the redbearded giant, smiling cheerfully, followed his example.

At the far end of the table, Glinderen stared from the pair on the floor to Roberts.

"This is murder!"

Roberts was inclined to think Glinderen had a point. But, before he could open his mouth, a duplicate of his voice said coldly, "Had they been of your party, Mr. Glinderen, they might yet be alive, but you might not. The great houses of the Empire are not filled by hereditary lackwits or degenerate scions forty generations removed from greatness. Neither are they filled by those of such eager humility that they may at will be trodden underfoot by rats in human form. He who insults a Great Lord of the Empire, Mr. Glinderen, lives at the mercy of that Great Lord, out of religious motives or as an exercise in self-command, not out of an innate right to insult his betters. You, Mr. Glinderen, are yourself deeply in my debt, and in the debt of their Graces of Malafont and Greme. Thus far, I have used against you less than my full strength, out of recognition that you believe you do right. That is past. One wrong move on your part, and you go the way of those two on the floor. Seat yourself and let your men seat themselves. Let them keep silent, on peril of their lives. Let you answer my questions and ask none of your own. Your actions have already strung the bow of patience so tight that just a little more will break it."

Glinderen sat down, wide-eyed. His subordinates swallowed, sat down, and kept their mouths shut.

Roberts waited an instant, but the battle armor had apparently said all it—or the symbiotic computer speaking through it—intended to say. It was up to Roberts to fill the growing uncomfortable silence.

Roberts leaned forward. "Where is the Baron of the Outer City, Mr. Glinderen?"

Glinderen swallowed hard. "He was carrying on a brutal policy. I —deposed him. He is in prison."

Roberts glanced at Kelty. "Is this true?"

Kelty said, "From Glinderen's viewpoint, it's true. There was a lot of bloodshed in the Outer City—mostly in the attempt to straighten

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the place out in a hurry. I didn't have any authority there any more. The roboid police couldn't go in. That meant order had to be kept some other way. The way it was being kept was rough, all right. The general idea was that the first time a man was caught stealing, for instance, they beat him up. The second time, he lost a hand. The third time, they killed him. That was pretty tough, but it was creating a sense of property rights. Without that, they couldn't get anywhere, because if someone did do a good job, and got rewarded for it, the reward could be robbed or stolen anytime, so it was meaningless. Well, it was working, and then Mr. Glinderen came down, and convinced the computer, which placed the roboid police at his command, and the next time the Baron of the Outer City came in here, Glinderen imprisoned him. Glinderen then tried to take over all the rest of the city with the roboid police, but by now it was too tough a proposition. Then he tried to pacify the populace by being very lenient. In the process, crime skyrocketed. We have crimes now that we never dreamed of before."

At the other end of the table, Glinderen was beginning to show an impatient urge to speak.

Roberts deliberately laid his fusion gun on the table, the muzzle pointed at Glinderen.

The planetary administrator stopped fidgeting.

Roberts said to Kelty, "Release the Baron. Have him brought up here, with all the respect due his rank and duty."

"I don't know if the computer will cooperate."

"The computer will cooperate—or cease to exist."

Kelty got up, and left the room.

Roberts looked at Glinderen. "What was Mr. Peen's business here?"

"He was a . . . commercial representative for Krojac Enterprises."

"Why was he here?"

"To arrange for an emergency repair and salvage facility here. A new colonization route is being established. This will mean a sizable flow of traffic past this solar system. Krojac Enterprises is contractor for a rest-and-refit center further along the route, and naturally they want to increase their business. The traffic past here should be sufficiently large that a repair-and-salvage facility would serve a useful purpose, and be profitable."

Roberts sat back. Suddenly the reason for the gathering of commerce raiders was clear. The looting of a colonization convoy offered enormous profits in captured ships.

He said, "Do these colonization routes of yours suffer from the attacks of brigands?"

Glinderen nodded. "Occasionally. These are usually very brutal affairs. Why do you—"He paused, looking at the fusion gun.

Roberts said easily, "This ex-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

plains why your Space Force should set up a watch in the asteroid belt of this sun. It is a convenient place to protect against such attacks."

Glinderen's face cleared. "Yes," he said.

Just then, the door opened, and Kelty came in. "The computer has released him. He's on the way up."

"Good." Roberts glanced back at Glinderen. "Now, Mr. Glinderen, I am curious to know how you could seek to wrest a world of mine from my grip without fear of what would follow. I also wonder at your effort to name me as someone other than Vaughan of Trasimere. I want a short clear rendering, and it had best be courteous."

Glinderen's face took on the look of one asked, in all seriousness, why he thinks planets are curved and not flat.

"Well—"said Glinderen, his voice betraying his emotions, and then he glanced at the gun lying on the table. He started over again, in the voice of one humoring a dangerous lunatic: "Your . . . er . . . Grace may be aware—"

Hammell said, with a flat note in his voice, "None of lesser rank and station may so address His Royal and Imperial Highness. From you, though you intend it not, this is a familiarity."

Morrissey added, less graciously, "A complete foreigner, unfamiliar with the proper code, had best avoid such bungling meticulosity—lest he put his foot in the wrong place and be dead before he know it."

Roberts said courteously, "There is no need, Mr. Glinderen, to try to speak as one who belongs to the Empire. Just answer the question in plain words."

Glinderen was now perspiring freely. "Yes," he said. "First, I . . . never heard of this Empire before. Second, there was an . . . an incredible reference to a certain 'Oggbad the Wizard.' Third, you and your men invariably appeared in battle armor of a type that offers little view of the face; this was an obvious . . . a . . . ah . . . apparent attempt at disguise. Fourth, only two of your ships ever appear at close range. That suggests that there are no more. Fifth, Vaughan N. Roberts and a number of companions were on this planet some time ago, and the records show that very strange things happened at that time also.

"It seemed to me that the conclusion was perfectly clear. To disprove it, you have only to remove your armor, one at a time if you wish, and show that your appearance is not that of the people who were on this planet before, and who were known to Mr. Kelty and others here. Also, if you will bring in, to close range, some more ships of your . . . ah . . . Imperial Fleet—it might do a good deal to convince me. That such an Empire should exist, and be unknown, seems to me frankly incredible."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Glinderen snapped his jaw shut and sat silent, trembling slightly. Roberts studied him, well aware that Glinderen had, in a few well-chosen words, exposed the whole masquerade. Kelty and the red-bearded technician were glancing at Roberts, as if to try to read his concealed facial expression. At the door, the Great Leader, the fanatic known as the Baron of the Outer City, stood listening attentively. If these people should be persuaded by Glinderen, Roberts's only support would be the patrol ship's weapons.

To Roberts's right, Morrissey shoved his chair back. "This fellow hath a tongue that—"

Roberts put his hand on Morrissey's arm. "It is true he is frank-spoken, but it is at my request."

Morrissey settled reluctantly into his seat. Roberts looked at Glinderen. "First, you say you never heard of the Empire. Space is large, Mr. Glinderen. The Empire knows of the outspace worlds, if the outspace worlds know not of it. This planet is out of our way. We would never have come here save for an attempt on the part of Oggbad to seize the throne by intrigue and the use of his magical powers. That you know not of such things is proof of your ignorance, nothing more. Possibly you suppose that Oggbad is a harmless fellow, who with vacant mind recites some empty formula, traces a wandering sign in the air, and with palsied hand shakes a wand the while he gibbers his insanity at the yawning moon. If so, you judge not by the thing itself, but by your image of the thing. You hear the echo of a distant explosion, and smile that people feared it where it tore the earth open. You charge us that we do not expose our persons and faces, and yet Oggbad with all his powers is on this world! What would you have us do, hand ourselves over to him, bound and gagged?

"You say that only two of our ships have appeared at close range, and it would perhaps convince you if there were more of them here. I have but to give the word, and this planet is ringed with them. But to bring them to the surface of this world were a source of grave danger. How, then, could we know that Oggbad, using arts that are none the less real for your disbelief, had not escaped aboard one of these ships? With Oggbad, one must keep a firm grip, lest a seeming illusion turn out real, and what was thought reality dissolve into mist. Next, you say a man with a name like mine passed this way before, and strange things took place. That this should convince *you* is not odd. My wonderment is greater yet, as I see here the design of Oggbad, forehanded to prepare a trap for the future, if it be needed.

"What you know not, Mr. Glinderen, is that at this time, the mere rumor of the escape of Oggbad would work great evil in the Em-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pire. At this moment, the Electors are met in solemn conclave to weigh the might and worth of the contestants to the throne. None of the contestants may remain on hand, lest by threat or subtle blandishments they seek to weight the scales of judgment. All are retired from the lists, some to prepare their minds for the outcome, others to repair the neglect of their domains occasioned by the struggle for primacy. Just so am I here. But if word were now given that Oggbad were loose, no one knew just where, who could trust the deliberations of the Electors? Who would accept their decision, and who claim that the influence of Oggbad had weighed invisibly in the balance? The trouble we have had from this sorcerer beggars a man's powers of recollection. To risk that he be let loose on us again is too much. Only after the Electors' choice is made dare we think to risk it. His power for mischief shrinks once the choice is made. Then the Empire draws together, no longer split, but one solid whole."

Roberts paused, noting that Kelty, the redbearded technician, and even the fanatical leader of the Outer City, were all nodding with the satisfied expressions of those who hear their leader successfully defeat an attack that threatens them as well as him.

What surprised Roberts was the wavering expression on the face of Glinderen.

"Yes," said Glinderen, wonderingly, "this certainly does answer many of my objections. However—"

Roberts spoke very gently. "Remember, Mr. Glinderen, I am not on trial here. Have a care. Where I have explained to you, many would have said, 'The actions of this outspace dog, and the wreck he has made, offend me. Dismember the fool!' "

To Roberts' right, Hammell started, like one whose attention has wandered.

"Your Grace?" He glanced from Roberts to Glinderen, and there was a click as he gripped his sword.

"Not yet," said Roberts. "It was only a thought."

"Your Grace has but to give the word—"

"I know, but it is not yet given." Roberts glanced at the redbearded technician. "As we talk here, has Glinderen some hidden device to record our actions?"

"Not Glinderen, but that pair on the floor are wired from head to foot."

"We may wish to speak privately later. Let us take care of this now."

The technician called in some guards, who carried the bodies outside.

Roberts, considering what to do next, now heard a perfect reproduction of his voice say calmly, "This business is about complete. The authority of Glinderen here is at an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

end. The laws he has enacted exist now on the sufferance of you, my barons, who may do as you wish to right the damage as quickly as possible. I like not what I have heard here. This fellow Glinderen could not doubt Oggbad if Oggbad had acted full-force against him. Has Oggbad been quiet of late?"

Kelty nodded. "No attempt to break through since Glinderen has been here."

Roberts settled back to let the armor do the work—whereupon the armor quit talking.

Roberts said, "By holding back, Oggbad recuperates his strength, convinces Glinderen the tales of his prowess are naught but wild imaginings, and allows Glinderen free rein to turn our arrangements into chaos at no cost to Oggbad. The next move may be an attack by Oggbad in full strength. Are we prepared?"

Kelty said, "If the Baron of the Outer City will take over control of his territory, I can put back in line all the roboids we've pulled in to keep order."

The Baron nodded. "O.K. Provided you deliver to me that lot of special prisoners, and let go everybody jailed under the no-defense law."

"Done," said Kelty. He glanced at Roberts. "We'll have a far stronger setup than we had when Oggbad made that first big attack. I doubt that a similar attack would get by the walls, except for some coming in by air."

"Unfortunately," said Roberts, "Oggbad is not likely to attack the same way a second time. What if he ravages the crops?"

Kelty hesitated. "We have gas generators, an airborne corps of the defense force, and a few very fast gas-laying vehicles. We'd have more but our production program was cut back by Glinderen."

Roberts turned to the redbearded technician.

"How is your production of special devices?"

"Derailed. We're back on the old maintenance routine. Somebody in KQL block smashes a light bulb, so we put in another one, and he smashes that, and so on, until everyone who feels like smashing a light bulb gets bored, and they decide to let us put one there. It's PDA order that all kinds of stuff must be maintained. Well, you can see what level we're operating on."

Kelty said, "But the best of it is that whoever gets caught gets his picture and an account of his exploits in the *Paradise Star*. Some PDA administrator claims this 'gives the offender a sense of identity and being-ness.' The lack of that was supposed to be the cause of the trouble, so this is to cure it." Kelty glanced at the technician. "Did you bring that—?"

The redbearded giant smiled ironically, and handed over a folded glossy sheet, which Kelty opened out and turned around. "Yes, here we are. We wanted you to see this."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He handed the sheet to Roberts.

Roberts flattened the sheet on the table. It was nicely printed, with the words "Paradise Star" in large flowing letters at the top, over the picture of a small angel carrying a harp and flying toward a stylized star. Under this was a banner headline:

LRP Block. Citizen Surl Dulger today killed sixteen women and children using as weapon a knife he made from a New Venusian wine bottle that he stole himself.

Asked if he did not feel sorry for the victims, Surl Dulger said, "They had it coming."

When officers asked what they had done to have it coming, Surl Dulger replied, "Grermer only got fifteen. This is a record right? I got the record?"

Officers assured him that indeed he had.

This is a new homicidal record for LRP block.

Surl Dulger, the new record holder, was born in a neat white room in the Heavenly Bliss Hospital on a rainy morning just seventeen short years ago. Strange to say, seventeen is just one more than the number of women and children Dulger slew this morning. Whether he . . .

Roberts looked up. "What manner of joke is this?"

"Oh," said Kelty, "that's no joke. That's *news*. That paper is turned out by the million of copies."

The technician said, "Right this minute, we've got between six and seven hundred of these guys undergoing rehabilitation downstairs, and we've got sixty more second-guesting after making new records."

Kelty nodded, "And at the present rate, it won't be long before they're coming around the third time. What gets me is that we have to arrest the citizens if they try to defend themselves. If you protect yourself, you're denying the murderer his 'right to an identity,' and only a trained psychologist is competent to decide whether this will interfere with the murderer's later treatment."

Roberts looked at Glinderen. "This was *your* idea?"

"No," said Glinderen. "It was recommended by my Chief of Psychology."

"But you approved it?"

"I lack the specialized knowledge to evaluate the program. Therefore it received automatic approval."

"Where's your Chief of Psychology?"

"Probably in his office. I can—"

"Did you have any *doubts* about this procedure?"

"Well . . . I asked some questions. I was reassured, however, that this was a valuable therapeutic method."

The technician nodded. "I happened to be watching that conversation on the surveillance screen. That was before Glinderen ordered us to stop using the surveillance

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

system. What happened was that the psychology chief said this method would 'create a sense of real importance and meaningful existence' in the criminal. Glinderen hesitantly asked, 'What about the victims?' The psychology chief said, 'Unfortunately, they are dead, and we can do nothing for them. *Our* duty is to rehabilitate the living.' Glinderen nodded, and that was it."

Hammell growled, "If I might have directions where to find this Chief of Psychology—"

"No," said Roberts, "that's too good for him." Roberts glanced at the fanatical leader of the Outer City. "Baron, have you considered this problem?"

"Yes, but I can't think of anything slow enough."

"Hm-m-m," said Roberts, forgetting he was in armor, and absently putting thumb and forefinger to the faceplate of the suit. "There must be some—"

Glinderen said, "He is a PDA—"

"But," said Roberts, "if he should *volunteer* to take up residence in Paradise—in order to give the planet the benefit of his vast experience—"

The Baron of the Outer City nodded agreeably. Kelty smiled. The redbearded giant absently flexed his large muscular hands.

"If he should volunteer," said Roberts, "then perhaps the best place for his services would be in whatever block has the most vigorous competition for a new homicide record. Possibly he can contribute to 'a sense of real importance and meaningful existence' in someone there."

"Yes," said the Baron of the Outer City, with a beautiful smile.

Glinderen burst out, "What if he should be *killed?*"

Roberts said regretfully, "Unfortunately, he would then be dead, and we could do nothing for him. *Our* duty is to rehabilitate the living."

Glinderen nodded, blinked, and stared at the wall.

Roberts said, "Then *that* is taken care of. Gentlemen, these matters must be settled, but the longer we dwell on them, the greater the danger that Oggbad may make some determined move—"

Kelty said suddenly, *"If* he's still here. I don't know why I didn't think of this. Glinderen's PDA ships have come down here and taken off again. He could have sneaked away on any of them."

Everyone looked at Roberts. Once again, the whole structure of his argument threatened to collapse.

Roberts thought fast, then shrugged. "*Outspace* ships. Yes, he could leave the planet, but what then? Oggbad's ambition is to seize the throne of the Empire. Luckily, to pass from here to the Empire requires special navigating devices which outspace ships lack, and which Oggbad himself does not understand and cannot build. His own ship, he has lost. Yet, if he escapes,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it *must* be on a ship of the Empire, with such a navigating device installed, unless Oggbad wishes to carve out a new domain in the outspace realms. If so, why, we are well rid of him. *I* believe he is here."

Once again, everyone looked convinced. Roberts himself *felt* convinced. Oggbad and the Empire were taking on such reality that Roberts had to remind himself to do nothing that would commit him to produce proof.

Noticing this, Roberts felt a sudden suspicion. But there was no time to check on that. He turned to Glinderen. "If you are given the opportunity to leave this planet, how long will it take you?"

"Several weeks, to get everything in order."

"You may as well start now."

Glinderen and his party obediently left the room.

"Now, gentlemen," said Roberts, "there remains one problem. Glinderen has called for help from the outspace fleets. Of course, the Imperial battle fleets"—Roberts found himself believing this as he said it —"will defend the planet, but there is still the problem that our ships dare not come so close that Oggbad can use his powers upon them. This means that close defense must be handled by the city itself." Roberts glanced at the redbearded technician. "We need multiple rapid-fire guns and missile launchers. Have you plans for them, and can you make them?"

The technician nodded. "We were working on those, as a defense against Oggbad, when Mr. Glinderen landed. With this maintenance headache off our necks, we can get back to it."

"Good," said Roberts. "The city must quickly be put in order, and its defenses made strong."

His three principal human lieutenants expressed eagerness to get to work, and the planetary computer made no objection, so Roberts stood up, and everyone else at the table followed suit.

Just then, with the tricky meeting completed, with the major factions on the planet unified, and with Glinderen safely sidetracked, the outside door opened up and, one-by-one, there walked in to the quiet tap of a drum, six man-sized figures in silver armor.

Roberts watched speechlessly as they approached. The armored figures themselves he recognized as the type of roboid the patrol ship had put forth once before. Where they came from in the cramped ship was a good question. But even more pressing was the question why the patrol ship had chosen this instant, when everything seemed momentarily straightened out, to toss in a new complication.

The six silver-armored figures, meanwhile, crossed the room, directly toward Roberts. The first, with drawn sword, stopped to Roberts's right. The second, stopped to his left. The third, with a golden

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tray, halted directly before Roberts, and kneeled. The other three, heavily-armed, halted and stood guard.

Roberts did the obvious, lifted up a large glittering jewel, took the sealed envelope lying underneath on a silver cushion, and spent a few precious seconds futilely turning the envelope. The battle armor, strong enough to toss gigantic creatures around like kittens, had nothing corresponding to fingernails.

Roberts exasperatedly tore off an end, worked the message out, and read past a set of figures, dates, and code words, to the sentence: . . . ELECTORS CHOSE THIS DAY HIS ROYAL AND IMPERIAL HIGHNESS, VAUGHAN, DUKE OF TRASIMERE AND EARL OF AURIZONT, TO BE KING AND EMPEROR . . .

What good this did, Roberts didn't know. But he was now stuck with it.

"The Electors have chosen," he said, and handed the paper to Hammell and Morrissey, who at once dropped to one knee, heads bowed, to murmur, "Your majesty—"

Cursing inwardly, Roberts considered the problem of Kelty, the technician, and the fanatical leader of the Outer City. He held the message out to them, and said, "For the immediate future, this changes nothing. Oggbad in his rage may still lash out. All preparations must go forward without delay. But"—his voice took on a harder tone—"the day of faction in the Empire is gone. Outsiders now interfere at their peril. 'Tis customary to kneel, my lords and gentlemen, as a sign of fealty." The three men, with varied expressions, dropped to one knee.

Roberts considered how to quickly bring the thing to an end.

"Rise," he said, "we must be about our duties without delay. No one knows when Oggbad will attack, or what the outspace vermin will do next. Good evening, gentlemen."

With the silver-armored figures serving as guards, Roberts, Hammell, and Morrissey left the hall.

Once inside the ship, they watched the armored figures disappear through an opening forward of the control console. Once the figures disappeared, the opening disappeared. The three men got out of their armor, and looked at each other.

Hammell said, "When there's time—"

Morrissey nodded. "We'll have to go over this ship. There's more to it than I realized."

Roberts locked the hatch, and said, "What that business about the Electors did to improve things, *I* don't know. But we've got Glinderen off our necks, and the chief factions on the planet are now united."

Hammell shoved his armor into the locker on its sling. "I had my doubts in there whether we were doing the right thing, but that business about Glinderen's Chief of Psychol-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ogy did it for me. If we don't get anything done here but to deliver that guy to the wolves, we've accomplished something."

Morrissey shoved his armor into his locker, and glanced at the spy screen. "The screen's working. I don't like to say anything, but I left the want-generator set for 'desire to sleep' and it's now set for 'desire to believe, to accept on faith.' "

"Stands to reason," said Hammell dryly. "Where's it focused?"

"On the Barons Council Hall."

Roberts had already put his armor away and now stripped and jabbed a button in the wall. A cramped shower cubicle popped open. "The only thing that bothers me," he said, "is the Space Force expedition headed for the planet. But there must be a way to straighten *that* out, too—if we can just work it out."

The following weeks went by like a pleasant interlude between hurricanes. Glinderen was too busy getting ready to leave to make trouble. His Chief of Psychology, having made the mistake of walking alone past the wrong doorway, "volunteered" to become a citizen of Paradise, and was now cozily bedded down in the most murderous section of the city. Every authority in the city was working day and night to prepare against attack. Roberts, Hammell, and Morrissey devoted most of their time to the want-generator and spy screen. By now, they had a formidable total of partly-trained soldiers who could put up a fight in fixed defenses. The Citizens' Defense Force, and the fanatics of the Outer City, promised far worse trouble for an invader. The roboid police, so long as they were on solid footing, had the advantages of speed, uncanny coordination, and an impressive lack of fear.

The city's technicians, meanwhile, relieved of endless maintenance, put back in shape all the devices they had hidden on the arrival of Glinderen. These devices, combined with the rapid-fire guns the computer's automatic factories were now turning out, promised that the city would be able to put up a tough fight.

However, one little problem remained to be solved.

The day following the departure of Glinderen and his administrators, Hammell remarked, "So far, so good. Now, what do we do when the Space Force shows up?"

Morrissey suggested, "There's no love lost between the Space Force and the Planetary Development Administration. And Glinderen belongs to PDA. Can we make anything out of that?"

Roberts shook his head. "If we make PDA look silly, the Space Force will be secretly delighted. But it's still their duty to physically back up Glinderen. We'll be just as dead afterward, no matter *how* they chortle at his expense."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"One thing I wonder about," said Morrissey, "is why you told Glinderen the Space Force had a detachment in the asteroid belt?"

"Because Glinderen is almost sure to go straight to them. I'm eager to see what happens."

"How will we see what happens?"

"When Maury and his boys had us in their gravitor beam, they sent up some fishnet pickups to listen in on any tight-beam messages passed between our ships. The symbiotic computer planted parasite circuits in the fishnet pickups. Those pickups are expensive. They've long since been pulled back in, and stored where Maury can see that no subordinate appropriates them. Many of the parasite circuits—which outwardly are little more than electrically-charged dust particles—have floated off into the atmosphere of Maury's base, to stick to walls and viewports, and get carried out to other places on people's clothing. Every time Maury checks his pickups, more parasite circuits float out. Each of these circuits will relay signals from other circuits. And on the way from the asteroid belt to the planet, here, the patrol ship sowed microrelays at intervals to pass along the signals. That's how we'll know what happens."

Later that day, Glinderen's ships arrived off the asteroid belt, and were stopped by the two-day wonder. Glinderen immediately reported the situation on Paradise. The two-day wonder got hold of Maury. Maury appeared, dressed as a general, speedily dug out all the information he wanted, and gave orders to let Glinderen proceed. Glinderen refused, and demanded action.

The two-day wonder now exhausted his stock of military poses trying to get Glinderen to move on. Glinderen angrily accused the two-day wonder of trying to evade his responsibilities, and threatened to report him to Sector Headquarters. The two-day wonder called Maury. Maury, determined not to saddle himself with a horde of administrators who were worthless for ransom, but sure to bring on a crusade if he killed them, promised immediate action, and sent some followers disguised as Space Force men, who methodically smashed the infuriated Glinderen's transmitters, but otherwise left the ships undamaged.

Having got rid of Glinderen, Maury remarked to one of his chief lieutenants, "The more I hear of it the better this Empire looks."

"Tricky stuff to fool with," said his lieutenant uneasily.

Roberts listened alertly.

"Yes," said Maury, "but they'd ransom that king."

"Get our head in a sling if—" Maury's lieutenant paused. "But if they made trouble, we'd kill the king, right?"

"Right. And he's down there with just two ships. Get the latest on that convoy. It's already had a five-day delay at R&R XII-C. If we stick

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

around waiting for it, we'll be here when the Space Force comes through after this king. If *we* grab him first, then if he's real, we get the ransom. If he's a fake, we take over his racket, whatever it is."

Hammell said shakily, "Boy, that's all we need."

Morrissey, at the want-generator, said "Now what?"

"Maury," said Hammell, "is coming down here with his fleet of commerce raiders to grab 'the king' for ransom."

Roberts smiled the smile of the angler when the fish takes the worm. "Yes, and *that* gives us our chance."

"How?" demanded Hammell. "Maury may not be as tough as the Space Force, but he's next best."

"Yes, but if this preliminary bout with Maury turns out right, maybe the main event with the Space Force will get canceled."

"How do you figure that?"

"If we aren't here, there isn't much the Space Force can do to us."

"Meaning, if we run for it—"

"No. In *that* case, the situation is open-and-shut. We're guilty, and our story is a fake."

"Then, how—"

"If we disappear—If Maury *is seen to capture us*—"

"Then Maury's got us! How does that help?"

"Suppose the sequence of events goes like this: Maury attacks. After a stiff fight, he is seen to haul us into his ship on a gravitor beam. He leaves. The Space Force arrives. Beforehand, naturally, we've destroyed any identifying marks on the yacht. All the Space Force has to go on is that Maury swallowed us up, and then Maury vanished. Now, on that basis, who can prove anything about anything?"

Morrissey was nodding enthusiastically. "It's not foolproof, of course, but—"

"Not foolproof!" said Hammell. "Ye gods! Look, Maury captures us, and then disappears. How do we get away from Maury?"

Roberts said irritatedly, "Obviously, he never captured us in the first place."

"You just said—"

"He is *seen* to haul our ship in on a gravitor beam. That's how it *looks*. Our ship disappears into his larger ship, and his ship, and his fleet, then leave. That's the *appearance*. But what actually happens is, *we* capture *him*."

Hammell's eyes widened.

"We use *our* gravitor beam," said Roberts, "and once in Maury's ship, you and I get out, in battle armor, while Morrissey beams 'desire for peace' at Maury and his crew. We'll be drugged against the effect of the want-generator. We put it to Maury, do as we say or else. Then, if necessary, Morrissey beams 'desire to obey' at the rest of Maury's fleet as Maury orders them to leave. Bear in mind, Maury is out to *capture* us. He won't attack to kill."

"Hm-m-m," said Hammell. "That

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

does seem to provide a natural explanation for everything. What Maury thinks, of course, won't match what everyone else thinks—but he won't be in any position to do anything about that."

Morrissey nodded. "It's risky. But it *does* give us a chance."

"I'm for it," said Hammell.

"Now," said Roberts, "it's just a question of working out the important details—"

Maury's commerce raiders came out of the asteroid belt like no Space Force fleet ever flown, each separate chief keeping his own ships of whatever size and class together.

The two-day wonder went to work at once:

"By order Space Force Sector H. Q., Lieutenant general Bryan L. Bender Commanding, this Force is directed to proceed to the planet Boschock III, and there establish formal relations with the representatives of the political entity known as The Empire."

The patrol ship was prompt to reply: "By command of His Royal and Imperial Majesty, Vaughan the First, surnamed The Terrible, this planet is inviolate soil, bounden into the fiefdom of His Majesty as Duke of Trasimere, and thereby into the Empire. You enter here at your own instant and deadly peril."

The two-day wonder lifted his chin heroically: "The Space Force has its orders. We can do no less than our duty."

The patrol ship headed directly for the onrushing fleet.

Hammell uneasily watched the battle screen. "That's a lot of ships."

"Yes," said Roberts, "but dead kings don't bring much ransom."

Maury's fleet closed in, and a new, more oily voice spoke up: "Certainly we of the Space Force do not have the slightest desire to do any harm to the most sacred person of your king. We are prepared to do whatever we can to accommodate these differences and smooth relations between our separate nations and viewpoints. We suggest that a meeting be held immediately following the landing—"

The patrol ship interrupted: "Following the landing, nothing will remain for you but penance in hell."

In quick succession, two gravitor beams reached out to grip the patrol ship.

In instantaneous reply, dazzling shafts of energy reached out from the patrol ship, to leave bright explosions in the distance.

An "asteroid," towed by two massive high-thrust ships, was now cut loose, and reached out with a narrow penetrating beam aimed at the patrol ship's reaction-drive nozzles.

The patrol ship deflected that, and two searing bolts of energy struck the massive asteroid, which was not visibly affected. There was a faint rumble as a missile dropped free from the patrol ship. There was another rumble, and another.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

More of Maury's ships methodically lanced out with fusion beams aimed at the reaction-drive nozzles. While the patrol ship could frustrate each attempt, the response was taken account of in the next try, the individual blows woven together to create a net in which the patrol ship's efforts grew rapidly more constricted. This was happening so fast that to Roberts it appeared to be a blur of dazzling lines on the battle screen, leading to one obvious result, until suddenly the patrol ship was caught, its own fusion beams deflected harmlessly by the combined space-distorters of the commerce raiders—

—And then, in rapid succession, dazzling bursts of light sheared an enormous chunk from the asteroid, while others knocked out four of Maury's ships.

Roberts blinked.

The patrol ship's missiles had somehow gotten through, completely undetected.

The auxiliary screen, still transmitting the scene in Maury's headquarters on an ultrafast rebuilt cruiser, showed the commerce raiders' consternation. But then the patrol ship swerved crazily, and swerved again.

"*Got* it!" growled Maury, mopping his brow.

From the patrol ship, fusion bolts lanced out in all directions, striking two of Maury's ships apparently by sheer chance. A missile blew up short of the mark, shot-holing another of his ships with flying bits and fragments.

Cursing, Maury's gunners reported that neither they nor their battle computers could keep up with the patrol ship's movements. They couldn't predict whether a hit would be crippling or deadly.

"Aim to miss," snarled Maury. "As long as they don't know we're doing it, it won't matter."

Firing furiously, with an inferno of attack around it, the patrol ship withdrew toward Paradise, spun down through the atmosphere, and by a remarkable last-minute feat of piloting, set down in only a moderately hard landing outside the Barons Council Hall.

A roboid policeman immediately rushed out, to guard the ship. From all directions in the Inner City, roboid police began racing to the scene.

"O.K.," said Maury. "Lay smoke."

A series of missiles streaked through the atmosphere, landed within several hundred yards of the downed patrol ship, and exploded in enormous clouds of dirty gray smoke.

The inrushing roboid police slowed abruptly.

"Landing ships down," said Maury.

Four big ships dropped fast through the planet's atmosphere, to disappear in the boiling uprush of smoke.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Landing teams out," said Maury.

Roberts depressed a communicator switch. "Kelty—open fire!"

The roar reached Roberts only faintly through the patrol ship's hull, but listening critically, Roberts was grateful not to be on the receiving end of the city's rapid-fire guns at short range. He gripped the controls. "Cease fire five seconds."

The firing died away.

The patrol ship burst up through the smoke. "Morrissey—"

"Ready."

"Coordinates—"

As Roberts flashed toward the ultrafast cruiser that was Maury's headquarters, suddenly the symbols on the battle screen seemed to multiply. At the same instant, Maury's fleet broke into individual squadrons racing in all directions. Maury's headquarters ship exploded, and out of the fragments shot a streak that dwindled to a speck before Roberts realized what had happened.

Then the outside viewscreen changed its scale, and showed the whole scene shrunk down to small size.

From the distance, a sizable fleet approached, its ships precisely positioned for mutual support. Before this fleet, like startled fish, the commerce raiders dispersed in all directions. Already moving off the edge of the screen was the chief commerce raider of them all, his escape ship pouring on acceleration as it streaked for the nearest break-point to some quiet hideout far from trouble.

Roberts swore, whipped the patrol ship around, and shot after the fleeing commerce raiders, laying down a ruinous fire, and under its cover dropping inflatable deception packs among the widening clouds of debris.

Hammell, waiting in his battle armor to go into Maury's ship, called, "What's wrong?"

"The Space Force has showed up!"

Roberts spun the ship after another fleeing commerce raider, succeeded in laying a few more packs, and gave it up in disgust.

On the outside viewscreen, the approaching fleet was decelerating fast.

Morrissey said nervously, "*Now* what do we do?"

"Well, I've sowed a lot of deception packs—"

"What for?"

Roberts exhaled carefully. "The idea was that we could inflate them to dummy ships, beam 'desire to believe' at that fleet, and —"

Hammell said incredulously, "What, the Space Force?"

Roberts could now see just what likelihood there was of that working. "It's a *chance*," he said stubbornly, "and we're in no spot to ignore a chance."

"Then," said Morrissey, "let's get out of here! This ship is fast, isn't it?"

"That's an admission of guilt,"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

said Roberts, inwardly kicking himself for not "chasing" the commerce raiders at top speed.

Hammell had the same idea. "Why didn't you go after Maury? Nobody would have known whether you were chasing him, running away, or what."

"It would have been out of character," said Roberts lamely, "for the king to leave with a larger force approaching."

"Nuts!" said Hammell. "His screen could have been damaged. He could have been wounded or knocked out."

The communicator buzzed imperatively.

Moodily, Roberts reached out to snap it on. Before he could reach the switch, there was a *click*, and a cold voice said, "What interstellar force is this? Stand warned! This is a King's ship, on the King's business, and you have no right to patrol here."

An auxiliary screen lit up, to show a frowning officer in the uniform of a Space Force lieutenant general.

"What ship is this?"

"Imperial ship *Nom de Guerre*. Who asks?"

"Lieutenant general Nils Larssen. What Empire?"

"*The* Empire."

"Who commands that ship?"

There was a silence, and Roberts, fearing that the symbiotic computer had run out of words, snapped on the sound transmission.

"*I* command this ship!"

"Who are you? Identify yourself."

Roberts suddenly found himself at the parting of the ways. He could meekly identify himself. Or he could carry the bluff to the ridiculous point where he challenged the Space Force.

Abruptly he discovered that he couldn't back down.

He said coldly, "You come too late to save your comrades. They are dead, or fled like cowards. Now I wait to test *your* steel."

Larssen looked blank. He pursed his lips, turned away, then turned back, apparently to rephrase the question.

Roberts waited, grimly aware of the cracking ice he stood on.

At this delicate juncture, the symbiotic computer put its oar in. With icy hauteur, using Roberts voice, it said: "I have spoken."

Larssen opened his mouth and shut it. His face reddened. "Listen —I don't give a damn *who* you are! You'll answer my questions, and you'll answer them straight!"

Roberts groped for some way out.

Then he heard his own voice speak coldly from the communicator, as if to someone nearby, "The bark of this interstellar dog hath a petulant note."

Hammell's voice, though Hammell was standing by in silent paralysis, said coolly, "We know ways

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to train the surly cur, if he intrudes too far."

Morrissey was sitting at the want-generator, looking from Roberts to Hammell as if they'd gone insane, and now he had the added treat of hearing his own voice contribute, though his mouth was tightly shut:

"We'll send this rabble to the Earl of Hell, and let them mount patrol on the fiery march."

On the screen, Larssen paused, an odd listening expression on his face.

Roberts's own voice called, "Master of the Ordnance!"

"Ready, Sire!"

"Master of the Helm!"

"Ready, Sire!"

"Then we'll put it to the test! Master of the Helm, brace your engines! Master of the Ordnance, pick your targets!"

A roar and a howling whine sounded together as the gravitors counteracted the reaction drive, in a prelude to a furious burst of acceleration.

On the control console, a switch snapped forward, to activate the deception packs and create the appearance of a formidable squadron —though the Space Force detectors should quickly spot the trick.

Larssen, suddenly perspiring, called, "*Wait!*" Then he whirled and shouted an order.

On the screen, the hurtling formation of ships began slowly to turn, swinging away from Paradise.

Roberts, startled, saw Larssen turn back to the screen, his expression intent and wary.

"I didn't mean to intrude on a region you patrol."

An elaborately courteous voice replied, "To do so were an incivility bordering on the interstellar."

"Then *patrol* it if you want it so damned much!" snarled Larssen.

"The interstellar regions subject to the rule of His Royal and Imperial Majesty, Vaughan the First, we will patrol, surely."

Larssen shut his mouth with a click of the teeth.

The screen abruptly went blank, but a silent burst of profanity seemed to radiate from it after it was off.

Roberts, drenched in sweat, groped in his pocket for a handkerchief, but couldn't find one.

Hammell got out of his armor, looking like a ghost.

Morrissey staggered to his feet, and promptly banged his head on the shiny cylinder.

Roberts finally located the handkerchief, and wiped the sweat out of his eyes. He took another look at the outside viewscreen.

Larssen's fleet traveled past in formidable array.

Roberts glanced at the battle screen. On his side there was only the patrol ship, and the imitation ships blown up out of— Roberts blinked, and adjusted the outside viewscreen—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There amongst the seeming patrol ships and cruisers lay a gigantic ship—a dreadnought fit to take on whole fleets all by itself. The sunlit side was toward Roberts, and the name was clearly visible: *Coeur de Lion.*

The deception pack out of which a thing like that might be blown up would take a battleship to carry it.

Roberts took a deep breath. "Well, men, we're still alive. And here's one big reason."

Hammell ducked under the glittering cylinder, and looked at the screen.

Morrissey warily slid one hand along the cylinder and ducked under to stand beside Hammell.

"Great space!" said Hammell, suddenly seeing what Roberts was looking at.

Morrissey murmured, "*Coeur de Lion.* Isn't that the ship you said called you—when Maury stopped us at the asteroid belt?"

"Yes," said Roberts. "But I thought it was just a clever gambit of the symbiotic computer. Now there it is."

Hammell said uneasily, "It's friendly?"

"I hope so. But where did it come from?"

Hammell said hesitantly, "Apparently the Space Force didn't see it till the last minute. They were going to chop us into mincemeat, then all of a sudden, they changed their minds."

"It must have been *indetectable*—they've got some kind of device that blanks them out to radar, gravitor, and all the other standard detection systems!" said Roberts. "Wait, now. What—" Suddenly what he was trying to think of came to him: "Listen, our missiles got to Maury's ship *undetected.*"

Morrissey said wonderingly, "They were the missiles originally supplied with this ship?"

"*I* haven't bought any."

Morrissey stared at the screen. "Listen, this may sound nuts, but when I look at that ship, it looks to me a lot like *this one we're on.* That one is a whole lot bigger, and the proportions aren't identical, but—there's a kind of similarity of plan that . . ."

Hammell said nervously, "That dreadnought was indetectable. This ship's missiles were indetectable. That dreadnought looks like this ship, owing to a kind of similarity of plan. This ship is an Interstellar Patrol ship. It follows that that dreadnought—"

Roberts's throat felt dry.

Morrissey said, "What happens to unauthorized individuals who get caught using Interstellar Patrol ships?"

Hammell sucked in his breath. "The Interstellar Patrol is even worse to tangle with than the Space Force. They don't operate by the book. Setups nobody else can handle go to the Interstellar Patrol."

Roberts uneasily considered the bargain he had gotten—even

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

though it had cost the better part of his life's savings—when he bought the patrol ship at the salvage cluster. Now he wondered if, through some piece of treachery, the original crew had been slaughtered, and now the dreadnought was waiting patiently for Roberts to identify himself, and if he didn't—

"Nuts," said Roberts. He snapped on the communicator.

"Imperial Ship *'Nom de Guerre,'* His Royal and Imperial Majesty Vaughan the First commanding, to Imperial Dreadnought *Coeur de Lion*. How many of that first batch of outspace dogs got away with their skins?"

Immediately, a tough-looking individual appeared on an auxiliary screen. His gaze drilled into Roberts's eyes.

Roberts saw no virtue in pussyfooting around. If the dreadnought was going to blow him up, well then, *let* it blow him up. He looked directly into the eyes of the face on the screen, and growled, "The Empire does not maintain these ships at heavy cost that her captains may use them for toys. Speak up! Hast swallowed thy tongue? Didst accomplish anything, besides to look pretty?"

The tough scarred face on the screen broke into a momentary grin. "Your Majesty, forgive my witless hesitation. We feared you dead from these verminous outspacers. We cleaned out the lot, save for one that broke into subspace even as we poised thumb and forefinger to pop him like a grape."

"That one was the worst," said Roberts, as Hammell and Morrissey stared. "There went the brain and guiding will of the evil band."

"Some other time, he may run afoul of us, and have a slower ship, or we a faster."

"Hasten the day," said Roberts, smiling. He was beginning to think he had worked out the combination.

The face on the screen changed expression slightly.

"If Your Majesty please, the Empire anxiously awaits your return, to heal its wounds in the pomps and pleasures of the coronation. The Great Lords and Nobles count the days, till they may reaffirm their loyalty to the Crown, and swear allegiance to Vaughan the First. If we may accompany you—lest other outspace dogs pop up out of nowhere— 'Tis daring greatly, I know, to suggest it, but *Coeur de Lion* has spacious accommodation — We may take aboard *Nom de Guerre* and all, if you like— 'Twould speed the day of your return. I crave forgiveness if I presume—"

"And it were freely granted, but your offer is welcome. We shall come aboard at once."

The man on the screen bowed his head respectfully. "Your Majesty doth greatly honor us."

" 'Tis an honor to honor such loyal subjects."

The tough face looked humbly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

appreciative. Then the screen went blank.

Hammell and Morrissey stood speechless as Roberts headed the patrol ship toward the dreadnought.

Hammell took a deep breath. "Look—no offense if I just call you 'sir'? Is this an Interstellar Patrol ship? You must know a lot more about this than *we* do. Or is it a . . . ah . . . an *Imperial* ship?"

Morrissey swallowed and listened alertly.

Roberts said cheerfully, "We weren't talking on tight-beam, and there are plenty of technological ears on that planet, now that the technicians have had time to go to work. The more wide-awake among them will put together the number of times 'interstellar' and 'patrol' occurred in the conversation with Larssen, and then they will realize in whose tender hands their fate rests. But they can't prove a thing."

"Then," said Hammell, thinking hard, "this last conversation was a blind?"

"No, it just takes a certain piece of key knowledge to figure it out."

"What might *that* be?"

"Anyone listening to that conversation would be justified in thinking I was the boss. And because of the fact people might be listening, that's how it *had* to be. But what do *you* think?"

Hammell smote his forehead. "You were *ordered* to come on board?"

"That's right," Roberts said.

Morrissey said, "Why not just have the conversation on tight-beam?"

"Because I wanted to put them on the spot, to see what they'd do."

Morrissey glanced at the gigantic dreadnought on the outside viewscreen. "Anyone who'd do a thing like that ought to *be* in the Interstellar Patrol."

Roberts nodded. "As Hammell says, they don't operate by the book."

Morrissey stared at him. Hammell said, "Holy—"

Roberts pressed the button to the left of the instrument panel, near the glowing lens lettered "Smb Cmp," and said, "How does the Interstellar Patrol recruit new members?"

The symbiotic computer replied, "By whatever method works." It then described several reasonably conventional methods, and added, "*Ships* are sometimes used to obtain recruits, as nearly every independent individual actively operating in space, and hence basically qualified as a recruit, at one time or another needs a ship. The patrol ship is always modestly priced for its value, as the salvage operator finds it hard to dispose of, and impossible to break up. The ship attracts only a certain basic type. Those who want it must have the proper mental, physical, and moral equipment, and the right basic style of self-respect, or the ship's sym-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

biotic computer won't accept them. Those accepted are next tested by the use to which they put the power of the patrol ship's equipment. Those who successfully pass the built-in obstacles become members of the Interstellar Patrol, captains of their own ships, and, in due time, they often recruit their own crew at no expense to the Patrol—sometimes before they really accept that they are members—"

"Oh, my God—" said Hammell.

Morrissey looked thunderstruck. "I *knew* we should have stayed on the yacht!"

"—Or before the prospective crew," the symbiotic computer went on, "expresses a truly sincere desire to enlist. However, just as the judgment of the symbiotic computer is accepted in the selection of the ship's captain, so is the judgment of the captain accepted in the selection of the ship's crew. This method has proved highly satisfactory and inexpensive." The symbiotic computer paused a moment, then added, "Moreover, the procedure is in accord with the highest traditions of the Interstellar Patrol."

Hammell nodded. "It would be."

"Well," said Roberts, "don't complain. It's not everyone who escapes from a routine space-transport to be a king or a duke—or a member of the Interstellar Patrol."

Roberts saw the look of puzzled surprise, a brief glint of pride, and the glow of interest light the faces of Hammell and Morrissey. They weren't going aboard the gigantic ship as *prisoners*, to be interrogated. They were actually going as members of the legendary Interstellar Patrol.

Roberts saw the brief outthrust of jaw that told of determination to make good. That was how *he* felt, too.

It occurred to him that neither he, nor Hammell, nor Morrissey, would have voluntarily tried to enlist in the Patrol. The thing was too much. They might not make it. Their qualifications might not meet the standards. They might not like it if they did make it. So the Interstellar Patrol, with deep-laid craft, so arranged matters that none of them had the faintest idea what was going on until the thing was accomplished.

An organization run on that basis must be no lover of red tape and stuffed shirts. In an organization so capable of understanding human nature, it might be possible to get things done.

Roberts guided the patrol ship on its course, and gradually, the gigantic curve of the dreadnought loomed closer, to fill the viewscreen.

Before them, the big hatch slowly swung wide, to reveal the brightly-lighted interior. Spacesuited figures stepped into view, to wave them forward.

Carefully, Roberts guided the patrol ship through the hatchway into the gigantic spaceship. ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Pearly Gates Of Hell

JACK WODHAMS

Illustrated by Rudi Palais

Steadfast determination, the courage to try, try again, can eventually produce results—but they don't quite guarantee the results you want!

"A man has a right to die if he wants to," Ferley Olmun stated. "If a man gets tired of life, he should be allowed to pass on, to go out, to give up the ghost."

"They have to check dwindle," Lurc Escadiol said. "As it is, they've got a tough job. True, fifteen babies were born last year, but nearly every day, somebody, somewhere, dies in some freak accident."

"I have no such luck," Ferley said.

"It's just one of those things," Lurc said. "You have to be at the right spot at the right time."

"How is a man to know at which place, and when?"

"That is the question, isn't it?" Lurc said dryly. "You have come to me for certain aid?"

"I thought you might help. I did have a friend once. He mentioned your name, I remember. I'd forgotten. But it came back to me the other day."

"And you sought me out?" Lurc said. "Tell me, are you under wacha?"

Ferley nodded. He looked glum. "For a long time now," he said. "Ever since the first time I tried."

Lurc shrugged. "It is usual. Never mind. The audblocs are on. Although they have a fix on you, we can still talk with reasonable privacy. I have to be very careful, you understand. You have to convince me that you are in earnest." He proffered the bottle. "Another drink?"

"No, thanks. Not for me."

"So," Lurc said, "you have already tried a method or two?"

"Tried? I've tried every which way," Ferley said. "Came close a couple of times, too." He shook his head. "The first time was a mistake. It was a giveaway. I didn't realize it at the time. You don't, do you? Bang, you think, it's all over, but it's not. Very amateurish, really. When I look back, I shudder at my own naïveté."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO LINE.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"And they put you under wacha then?"

"I suppose they did. I wasn't aware of it, but they must have, because later . . ."

"What did you do that first time?"

"What? Oh. Barbiturates. I'd collected them, you know." Ferley sighed. "I saved them as a birthday present for myself. Last year. March. One hundred sixty-two years old, and fed up with the whole useless business. I've had enough living. I'm tired of it all. Bored. Some people wake up in the morning, glad to see the sun rise again. Me, I'm sick of the sun rising. It's so regular. It's monotonous. It means another day that has to be filled in somehow. And the same old things happen again and again."

"I see. So you took the barbiturates, but they failed."

"Of course they failed. Someone, somewhere, must have become suspicious. My collecting had not been discreet enough. I had hardly passed out before I was at the cleaners, being hosed through, tapped, and pumped. I was never more mortified in my life. It was a downright violation of my civil liberty. I hadn't imagined that they would be so strict on the matter."

"They're strict, all right," Lurc said. "Nobody gets away if they can help it."

"So I learned," Ferley said.

"What did you do then?"

"Well, I was quite annoyed, as you may guess. If I wanted to do away with myself, that was my business, and I could not see that the Government, or anyone else, had the right to interfere."

Lurc nodded. "You tried again?"

"If I appear to be a man of weak resolve, let me hasten to disabuse you. I wanted out, still do. Being thwarted only strengthens my determination. Certainly I tried again. Had a bit of luck the second time. Or, at least, it seemed like luck."

"What was that?"

"Well, I went down to visit my son. He has a farm in the country. He was one of the last born before the inconcept-impopoke genobact war, you know."

"Was he?" Lurc said politely.

"Yes, he was." Ferley mused. "That was a long time ago. Why, my visit down there was to mark the centenary of his purchase of the farm."

"And you tried to finish yourself off by way of celebrating?"

"Ah, well, no," Ferley said. "It was just that I poked about a bit while I was down there, and I came across an old can of weed-killer. In a barn. Can was rusty, stuff didn't smell too good, but it seemed like a gift to me."

"So you guzzled some?"

"Not right away. I mean, my son might have been upset. He's content, you know. Takes after his mother. No, I poured some in a bottle and took it away with me."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You drank it later?" Lurc asked.

"Yes, in my hotel room. Vile stuff to drink. Had a job to get it down. Shocking."

"And you woke up in the Clinic again?"

"No, dammit, I didn't. I'd just drained the bottle when they burst in on me. It was startling. They grabbed me, threw me on the bed, and cleaned me out right then and there. Two keepers and two nurses. It was a very humiliating experience."

"You were under surveillance, obviously."

"Obviously," Ferley said. "I woke up to that then. Damned impertinence. And what aggravates me most was that they had let me finish off the bottle before moving in with their disgusting apparatus."

"That's their way," Lurc said.

"You've experienced it, too?"

"Not personally," Lurc admitted, "but I am familiar with their methods."

"Ah." Ferley leaned back in the wicker chair. "They're cunning devils. To test them, I slashed my wrists shortly after that, and they came in through the window and patched me up before I'd dripped so much as a cupful. Very fast."

"Did they take you away?"

"Oh, yes. Usual thing. *Joie de vivre* sessions, *wunderbar* inculcation. Severe enough for those not strong of will."

"They didn't change you, though?"

"No. One of the first things I did when they released me was to throw myself in front of a pneuexpress. You know what happened?"

Lurc chuckled. "What looked like a solid front gave way, and you were scooped up, and thrown into a foam funnel that absorbed the shock. They let you out later, and made you look a complete fool."

Ferley wriggled. "So you know," he said feelingly. "It was most embarrassing." With a touch of defiance, he said, "If they thought that I could be dissuaded so easily, they were wrong. They made me more determined than ever."

"What else did you try?"

"Well, I decided to be as cunning as they were. I pretended to give up. I even pretended to be happy. Why, I was the life and soul of the local Mardi Gras. Dancing, singing, speech-making, I did it all. I made a great show of enjoying myself. I mixed with the crowd, got lost in the crowd, and then quietly slipped into a small hotel that I knew and ran down to the basement. I had the place to myself. I had a piece of nylon rope around my waist, and it was the work of a moment to climb up, fasten it to a beam, loop the free end around my neck, and kick the chair away."

"It's not easy to escape wacha," Lurc said. "Any respiration or heart anomalies alerts them straight away. You don't know where they placed your sensor, eh?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"No. I've no idea. I don't know where they put it."

"Hm-m-m. Pity. They're X-ray sensitive. Never mind. So the hanging was not a success?"

"It was awful. It was the worst suicide I ever attempted. Absolutely ghastly. I kicked and fought, and tried to get the rope off. It was terrible! Never again. I thought hanging was quick but, do you know, I found out afterwards that you have to drop to die instantaneously. Old-time hangmen let the body fall as much as six, or seven feet, and the jerk broke the neck. I did not know this then, and the choking! Without going through it, you cannot know how excruciating it is. It is writhing agony."

"And when did the keepers arrive?"

Ferley flushed with indignation. "They arrived in plenty of time. And what did they do? They just stood and watched me, that's what they did. Just stood there for *ages* watching me strangle. Humanity! They don't know the meaning of the word."

"It is their way. The more unpleasant the dying, the more discouraging they think it is."

"Ha! They didn't discourage me. As far as I was concerned, from then on it was war. Damned if I would give in."

"You still feel the same way?"

"Certainly I do. To me it is a challenge. I believe I have a right to commit suicide. And, to be quite honest, it gives me an interest in life."

"Oh." Lurc crossed his legs and steepled his fingers. "Was that the last attempt you made?"

"Good heavens, no. Do you think I lack integrity? I became dedicated to the task of discovering an answer. I decided to outwit them by any means I could think of."

"You sound as though you thought of a few."

"Well, I won't claim that the list is fully comprehensive, but it does show that I investigated possibilities over a wide range. I tried swimming out to sea from a popular beach. A hoverer was never far from me, and I think they may have done something to defeat the shark lure that I was using. I knew, too, that if I got into difficulties, I would be surely and ignominiously retrieved. To foil them, I swam back to the beach.

"Although, strictly speaking, this was an abortive attempt, I regard it as a small victory, inasmuch as I cheated them of an opportunity to gloat, in their superior manner, over my rescue. As it was, I almost died inadvertently from exhaustion. I was revived on the beach by prompt Red Cross aid, that beat the keepers by a narrow margin."

Ferley coughed. "After that, I tried a few high buildings, but was always stopped from approaching windows, or from gaining the roof. However, it is difficult to stop a man

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

determined to jump, despite an abundance of protective obstacles.

"I found a simple expedient. I went into the twenty-five story Ozard-Plaza. The keepers joined me as I entered. They stayed with me in the elevator to the top floor. Very cocky fellows. We left the car, and they went on ahead of me, full of confidence, covering the precipitous exit points. I hung back, fiddling with my briefcase.

"It was so simple. I stepped back into the car and pressed the 'Down' button. They were so surprised that they did not even come close to stopping the doors from closing. The car started down, and I stabbed the Emergency stop. It was marvelous. Complete privacy. I climbed the handrail, opened the trapdoor in the roof, pulled myself through, and there I was."

"You jumped down the shaft?"

"After savoring my triumph for a moment, and after directing a few choice words at the closed doors that were being hammered upon, yes."

"How did you get past the car?"

"My dear fellow, there's plenty of room to bypass the car."

"And you jumped?"

"Certainly. And a very nasty sensation it was, too. Had I stopped to think, I could never have done it. As it was, I just stepped off. A very nasty sensation. Quick, mind you, but nasty."

"But you survived?"

"No. That is to say, I was badly smashed up, as you might expect. Unfortunately, being on wacha, emergency standby is always ready to move into action. In minutes they were on the spot, had supplementary spinal plugged in, had me jelfridge wrapped, and on the way to the Clinic."

Lurc nodded. "And they managed to fix you up."

"After what I had been through, to wake up again in a bed was a shattering disappointment. I felt it most keenly. It seemed so unfair. It's like winning a game, only to lose it because your opponents cheat."

"How badly damaged were you?"

"Extensively. I was technically dead before they reached me. Practically every bone was broken, every organ ruptured. By bad luck my head remained intact. It would have made things a lot tougher for them if only I had had the forethought to dive."

"You must have taken an intenpsychourse stretch after that," Lurc said.

"I did," Ferley said with satisfaction. "They had to label me incorrigible and put me on hi-wacha. It is a doubtful distinction, maybe, but one that acknowledges that their control over individuality is not wholly irresistible."

"They seem to have made a good job of your repair."

Ferley snorted. "When I left the Clinic I had never felt physically

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

better in my life. I'm sure they pumped me with philoptim before they let me go. It worked against them, though. It made me confident that I could lick the problem."

"You didn't give up, then?"

"Does it look like it?"

"So you came to me?"

"Not straightaway. Having given you my history so far, I may as well tell you the rest.

"I had plenty of time during my enforced recovery to do some solid thinking. I realized that, to succeed in my self-ending, I would have to do something drastic. I toyed with the notion of high-voltage electricity for a while, but the difficulty of access was insurmountable. And I could not be sure that I would be burnt to a crisp. Likewise, having firsthand experience of their formidable reclamation techniques, I was reluctant to place my faith in the efficacy of firearms."

Ferley rubbed his hands and leaned forward. "My last endeavor was something of a fiasco. Terrific idea. No fault of mine.

"After the Clinic, I went down to see my wife. Married her in '58, you know. Lovely woman. Looks better today than the day we wed. But we're sick and tired of each other. We'd be celebrating our one hundred fortieth in June. But we've gone our separate ways long since. Still friends, of course. Providing we never see each other."

Lurc said, "That's common. Still, most people don't bother very much."

"True," Ferley said. "The conventions become meaningless. People change partners to suit themselves, and little is thought of the matter. This time, though, Heidi . . . that's my wife . . . got one who is a Catholic."

Ferley took a deep breath. "Well, you know how *they* feel about morality. So she wanted a proper divorce. He refused to live in sin and, come to that, he was not too happy about divorce, either. But he loved her, and divorce was better than bigamy.

"He was a widower. His own wife," Ferley said enviously, "was accidentally crushed to death when the Slimline Viaduct collapsed in Montreal."

"I see," Lurc said patiently "Does this have a bearing on your subsequent effort at self-disposal?"

"Oh, yes. Directly," Ferley said. "You see, I went down to see them, and it turned out that he was a surgeon, of all things. Naturally, you can appreciate that at first I regarded him as an enemy. But then, as I got to know him, I found that he was a very knowledgeable man indeed.

"He had been an engineer for sixty years. Then he had been a politician for forty, before resigning from the party over some difference of opinion. After that he studied criminal law, and was called to the bar, but after fifteen years or so, he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gave that up and became a commercial artist. That lasted about ten years, and then he turned his hand to writing. That only lasted a few years, and then he took up medicine. I don't know how long he'll be a surgeon. Perhaps that's why Heidi likes him, he chops and changes so much."

Resignedly Lurc shifted in his seat.

"He told me how he felt about Heidi, how he wanted to marry her, but I could see that the divorce business was blotting a rosy picture.

"Well, to cut the dance down to a two-veil quick-step, I told him frankly that I wanted to commit suicide. He wouldn't believe me at first, and then he was very upset. Horrified, in fact. However, after a good night's sleep, he was more thoughtful. I worked on him and, by behaving obnoxiously for a few days, I managed to persuade him that, by helping me to get rid of myself, he would be performing a public as well as an humanitarian service."

"Was his name Faubleman?" Lurc asked.

"Why, yes. How did you know?"

"Never mind," Lurc said. "Carry on."

Ferley puzzled for a moment, then gave up. "Well, being assured of my determination, he gave in at last and agreed to assist me. Suicide was against his religion but me, being an agnostic, I was more or less exempt. So we pooled our knowledge and reduced the problem to two solutions, fire and explosives. Incineration did not particularly appeal to me and, the pain apart, obtaining and using a sufficient quantity of incendiary material left far too much to chance. It was too risky. I wanted to be sure, you see. This left explosives.

"In the ordinary way I would have no means of acquiring explosive material, but here Faubleman proved invaluable. He had access to the ingredients for nitroglycerine. This is a very volatile substance, as you may know, and we had to overcome the delicate matter of transportation. It was unthinkable for me to carry a bottle of the stuff around with me in my pocket for, while eager to accomplish my own dispatch, I am not so selfish as to wish to take others with me. I had to do what I wanted to do alone, away from any possibility of injuring others. You can understand that?"

"An admirable sentiment," Lurc concurred amiably.

"With a bottle I could trip, or be accidentally knocked, and *Whoof!* exit passers-by. And a bottle could be lost, or discovered by my keepers. Also, being external, impact peculiarities could perchance have effects less than fatal. It was tricky. But Faubleman came up with the answer. Do you know what we did?"

Lurc looked a query.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Faubleman created a double sausage, one inside the other. The small one contained the glycerine. The outer skin was wrapped around it and, using an extended trachea tube, he poked the whole lot down my gullet into my stomach. Then he carefully filled the outer skin with the nitric and sulphuric through the tube, left a bubble of air for slop, and sealed the end."

"Good grief," Lurc said.

"I became a walking bomb," Ferley said proudly. "The glycerine sac was timed to dissolve in forty-eight hours. Ordinary movement would be sufficient to integrate the elements to a suitable consistency and then, *whammo*! she'd be ready to go."

"How did you propose to set it off?"

"Oh, everything was planned. I had a ticket for Las Vegas. From there a walk out into the desert as the time came close, and then, well, exercise. Run, jump up and down, calisthenics, anything. My keepers would not have bothered. They would have thought that I was just keeping fit. I would have liked to have seen the looks on their faces when I went off."

"What happened? Did the acid bag give way? That would have finished you, wouldn't it?"

"No," said Ferley positively. "A burnt-out stomach would be nothing to the Clinic." Then he added thoughtfully, "It would have been painful, though."

"What went wrong, then?" Lurc wanted to know.

"Ah. Well you see, for one reason or another, they got suspicious. I was just about to board the fly-car when they collared me, and hauled me off to the local Clinic."

"So that was the end of that."

"Not quite. They searched me, of course, but they found nothing. The X rays missed the plastic container in my tum. In spite of this clearance, though, they wouldn't let me go. They decided to keep me for a week's indoctoring."

"Good grief," Lurc said again.

"Exactly. I protested, of course, but, with my record, fervent protestations only made them more adamant. So that was that. I was helpless. And after the second day, I was worried."

"I suppose you would be," Lurc said. "Couldn't you get off by yourself somewhere?"

"Not a chance. I tell you, they suspected something. Everywhere I went at least two people were with me. And I slept in an open ward that held twenty close-packed beds, and two keepers patrolled all night. I just *couldn't* sneak off."

Lurc shook his head. "A very dicey situation," he said.

"You can say that again. After forty-eight hours I was afraid to move. I had no idea how powerful the stuff was and, really, a man would have to be callous to disregard the survival wishes of others. I couldn't bring myself to just casu-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ally explode anywhere. It is a distinctly personal thing. Consequently, I hardly dared to turn over in bed, and my keepers became concerned when I began to display symptoms which they construed as evidence of galloping senility. My movements, of necessity, became somewhat circumspect, and there was a marked absence of agility even in the turning of a page in a book. It was a very suspenseful time."

"When did this happen?" Lurc inquired with new interest.

"I left the Clinic five days ago," Ferley said. "Why?"

Lurc paled noticeably. "You obviously came through the ordeal," he said, his air of academic dispassion undermined by alarm. "You haven't still . . .?"

"Good heavens, no! On the sixth day I pressed the button on the flush, and about thirty seconds later there was a great *Crump!* and a whopping hole appeared in a street half a block away. Disrupted the sewage system in a very efficient manner. They're still working to repair it, I believe." Not without complacency he added, "And by the looks of things it's going to remain one of the biggest mysteries of the twenty-first century."

Visibly relieved, Lurc settled back into his chair. "Ah," he said. "Right then. Your last attempt, eh?"

"The last so far. I haven't given up, by any means."

"No. Otherwise you wouldn't be here. Tell me, what was the name of the man who told you about me?"

"His name was Barbeyer, Frank Barbeyer. He . . ."

"Ah, yes. Barbeyer. He was killed in that minor earthquake a year . . . no, about eighteen months ago."

Surprised, Ferley said, "That's right. He was the only casualty. The ground just swallowed him up. Did you read it in the newsflap?"

"No. What did he tell you about me?"

"Well, like me, he was having trouble doing away with himself. Cut a tree down first off, but at the last second the wind caught it, and it missed him. They didn't pick him up for that, but caught him later, on a hill in a storm, carrying a long copper pole. After that he cut his throat but, by then, he'd lost the initiative."

Lurc nodded.

"The last time I saw him," Ferley said, "he mentioned your name, and said something to the effect that you were going to help him. He didn't say in what way and, not being specific, I didn't pay particular attention. It's only recently, putting two-and-two together, that it occurred to me he meant you would help him to get rid of himself."

Lurc bowed his head. "I like to be sure of the resolution of my clients. Having heard you out, I am convinced that you are sincere."

Ferley was pleased. "You can help me, then?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Oh, yes. There is the minor matter of transferring funds to an overseas bank . . . you have funds, I presume?"

"But, of course."

"Good. After all, you won't need them where you're going."

"No, I suppose not," Ferley said. "Do you guarantee success?"

"If you follow the instructions, absolutely."

"Ah." Ferley sat back. "Well, that's good. Oh, I hope it won't be too painful?"

"It varies," Lurc admitted, "but it's usually reasonably quick."

"Hm-m-m." Ferley mused. "I, ah, don't suppose, at this stage, that you'd, ah, care to give me some idea of your method? Not that I'd renege," he said hastily, "but I am most anxious that the responsibility in the end shall be mine. I want to freely terminate my consciousness without distressing others, or causing others to feel guilty. I want the final choice to be mine."

"The final choice will be yours," Lurc said quietly. "As to copying the strategem I use, this would present more than a little difficulty to you, I think."

"You make me curious," Ferley said. "Am I allowed to know?"

Lurc gazed at him consideringly. "You have to know. You see I have prescience," he said candidly. "I am able to look into the near future, and thus am conversant with the imminence of natural catastrophe and material disaster."

"Oh," said Ferley, intrigued. "That's handy."

Lurc smiled faintly. "Putting you in the right place at the right time makes the whole business neatly accidental. There're no questions asked." He spread his hands. "A fortuitous occurrence. A matter of pure luck."

"Well, well," Ferley said. "That's very neat, I must say. What a useful talent."

"Isn't it, though?" Lurc said.

Very shortly thereafter, Ferley brought his Saf-t-ca to a halt beneath a bluff. Binoculars in hand, he stepped out, ostensibly to enjoy the magnificent view. His keepers hovered in a hi-scanna fifty meters away.

Ferley put the glasses to his eyes and leisurely studied the horizon.

Right on schedule the bluff gave way and, in a roaring cascading landslide, buried Ferley under hundreds of tons of rock.

Ferley opened his eyes. "Oh, no!"

A man in white was at his elbow. He wore a well-trimmed beard.

Why did they dig me out?" Ferley cried. "Why? Why couldn't they leave me alone?" Then in despair, "Am I never going to die?"

The man spoke, and Ferley heard his kindly words with emotions of mixed dismay.

"No," Saint Peter assured him with a smile, "you now have Eternal Life." ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Usefulness of Nicotine

Professor J. Harold Burn FRS

This article is reprinted from the excellent British weekly science magazine, NEW SCIENTIST. *Since we do not ordinarily reprint from other journals, there's obviously a special reason. In the September 1964 Analog I ran "Counterblaste To Tobacco," and pointed out that for three hundred years now people have damned tobacco, smoking, and the human folly of using the stuff—and everyone was so convinced of its absolute and unmitigated folly that no serious effort had ever been made to find out why human beings did accept it.*

This article is the first clear, and reasonably comprehensive, report on what's good about smoking I have ever encountered.

Inasmuch as I am constitutionally opposed to any one-side-only propaganda of any kind on any subject, I republish this article with delight.

It's of interest that the physiological-neurological findings show tobacco to be a tranquilizer and a selective stimulant. Compare these results with the fact that nearly all great world leaders have been smokers—until their doctors routinely commanded them to stop smoking. Of course Churchill, being the personality he was, didn't stop even then.

THE EDITOR

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE USEFULNESS OF NICOTINE

Imperial Chemical Industries and Imperial Tobacco have announced the establishment of a new company for the development of a tobacco substitute. Recent work suggests that any such material will have to possess subtle properties if it is to please the addict.

Work being done by Dr. A. K. Armitage and his colleagues at the Tobacco Research Council's laboratories in Harrogate is providing a valuable insight into the pharmacology of tobacco smoking. Their findings suggest one good reason for the extraordinary fact that, despite the widely publicized risks, around 124,000 million cigarettes are used in this country alone every year. It appears that nicotine produces highly desirable effects upon the brain.

In the nineties of last century, Langley showed that nerve cells could be stimulated by the application of nicotine. Some nerve cells in the brain send processes which pass for a long distance to end on other nerve cells which lie outside the central nervous system in so-called ganglia. There is, for example, a ganglion in the neck at which nerve processes from the brain terminate around other cells, some of which send processes to the eye. Langley applied a solution of nicotine to this ganglion in an anaesthetized cat and observed that the pupil of the eye dilated widely. He had demonstrated that nicotine could affect nerve cells just as they were affected by the impulses which travelled to them from the brain.

When nicotine is injected into a vein, it is carried around the body, and when it reaches a ganglion it excites the nerve cells. This is why nicotine causes the heart rate to increase.

Why does the drug have these effects? The explanation with which we have had to be satisfied for the last fifty years is that nicotine has

© *New Scientist* 1967. Reprinted from *New Scientist*, Vol. 34, p. 12

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

properties closely resembling those of another substance which is actually present in the body. This is acetylcholine, the acetic ester of the base choline, which is normally released when nerve impulses reach the nerve endings. When a nerve impulse from the brain reaches a muscle of the hand, for instance, acetylcholine is released and makes the muscle contract. Again, when impulses from the brain reach the ganglion in the neck, acetylcholine is released, stimulating the ganglion cells, which then send impulses to the eye to make it dilate.

But what about the action of nicotine inside the brain? Here, as in ganglia, there is a multitude of connections between the fibres of one set of cells, and the cell bodies of others, and here also, the arrival of a nerve impulse at a nerve ending causes the liberation of a chemical which acts on the cell body of the next neurone. (The term used to describe a nerve cell and all its processes.) The substance may stimulate or may depress the cell body. Several chemicals may be concerned, though it seems probable that only one is released by any one nerve fibre. The list of possible transmitters includes acetylcholine, gamma-aminobutyric acid, 5-hydroxytryptamine, tryptamine, dopamine (or dihydroxyphenylethylamine), noradrenaline, prostaglandin and glutamic acid. All are present in the brain, but whether all do act as transmitters is an important question still to be settled. However, it is accepted that acetylcholine does have this function. It is constantly being formed in the brain, and its formation is increased by brain activity. For example the brain of an anaesthetized cat can be cut off from the rest of the body, but leaving the eye connected by its nerves. Now when a light is shone in the eye, nervous impulses travel from the retina to the visual area of the cerebral cortex. It is possible to sink a tiny cup into the brain surface in this area so that small amounts of fluid from the surrounding tissue collect in the cup, and they can be analyzed. Even when no light is shone in the eye, some acetylcholine collects in the cup. But when a light is shone, the amount is greatly increased. (These are the observations of Dr. J. F. Mitchell in the Department of Pharmacology, Cambridge.) The increase is presumably due to the increased nervous activity in the area. The fact that acetylcholine is of great importance in the brain, and the fact that nicotine has properties which in many ways parallel those of acetylcholine, suggest that the entry of nicotine into the brain might increase normal physiological processes. Very interesting results in support of this idea have recently been obtained in the Harrogate laboratories.

In the middle of the brain are four interconnecting cavities called ventricles. A colourless fluid (the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cerebrospinal fluid, or CSF) is filtered into them from the blood and passes from one ventricle to another, bathing first the internal surface of the brain and later the external surface, and finally returning to the blood. A method devised by Feldberg and Sherwood for studying drug actions on the brain involves introducing the substance into a ventricle of an experimental animal by way of a fine metal tube inserted through the skull. The insertion is done under an anaesthetic, and the animal is allowed to recover. Thereafter drugs can be injected at any time. The presence of the tube in the brain does not affect the cat's health.

One of the effects produced when nicotine is introduced into one of the lateral ventricles is that the ears of the animal twitch, and the twitching can be recorded. The duration for which the ears twitch depends on the dose used. When the cat is not anaesthetized amounts as small as 2.5 microgrammes cause twitching. In the anaesthetized cats amounts such as 50 microgrammes cause twitching which lasts for five minutes.

This twitching is produced by the action of the drug on some part of the brain. Two pieces of evidence support this view. Actions of nicotine outside the brain in the rest of the body are abolished by two drugs, hexamethonium and mecamylamine. Hexamethonium is a bisquaternary compound which cannot enter the brain because it is not filtered from the blood into the CSF. The twitching is unaffected by the injection of hexamethonium into the body outside the brain. Mecamylamine is a secondary amine with a similar structure, and it can enter the brain. The twitching of the ears is prevented when mecamylamine is injected into the body outside the brain. These observations prove that the action of nicotine when injected into the ventricle must be exerted within the brain itself.

The second reason for concluding that the drug acts in the brain is more interesting because it involves a hitherto undescribed action of nicotine newly discovered in the Harrogate Laboratories. If physostigmine is injected into a vein outside the brain before nicotine is injected into the ventricle, then the ear twitching caused by nicotine continues for a very much longer time. Physostigmine is a substance which prevents the action of the enzyme cholinesterase which breaks acetylcholine down to acetic acid and choline. Physostigmine is thus an anticholinesterase. Hence if physostigmine has the effect of prolonging the ear twitching caused by nicotine, there is at once a suggestion of a connection between nicotine and acetylcholine.

The present observations thus point to the likelihood that nicotine resembles acetylcholine in its actions because it releases acetylcho-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

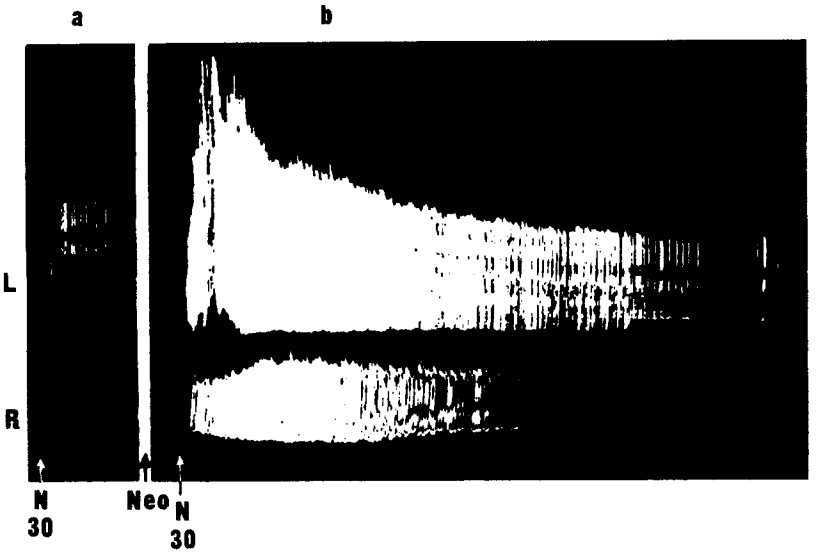


Figure 1 Record of ear twitches from left (L) and right (R) ears of a 3.2 kg cat. N30=30μg nicotine injected into the right lateral ventricle. Between (a) and (b) 20 μg of neostigmine (Neo) was injected intraventricularly

line from sites where it is bound. This is a very important suggestion. On the one hand it explains the similarity between the action of the two drugs and on the other hand it suggests that nicotine, so far from having a toxic or poisonous effect in the brain, acts by releasing a substance which is agreed by all neurologists to play a key part in the maintenance of normal brain relationships.

The evidence that nicotine releases acetylcholine in the brain is not based on the use of physostigmine alone. It is based also on the use of neostigmine, which is another anticholinesterase. This anticholinesterase however differs from the physostigmine in being a quaternary compound, and not a tertiary amine. The difference between them resembles the difference between hexamethonium and mecamylamine in so far as neostigmine cannot enter the brain while physostigmine can.

If, however, when nicotine is injected into the ventricle through the skull, neostigmine is also injected by the same route, the most striking increase in the effect of nicotine is seen as shown in Figure 1. In this figure the effect of 30 micrograms of nicotine injected into the right lateral ventricle is shown. The injection was followed by twitching of the left ear, which twitched 11 times. There was no movement of the right ear. Then 20 micrograms of neostigmine were injected into the ventricle. It had no effect of its own on either of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ears. Then the injection of 30 microgrammes of nicotine was repeated. The figure shows the very large increase of ear twitches on the left side and slightly later a prolonged period of ear twitching on the right side. The change produced in the effect of nicotine by the injection of neostigmine was thus most surprising in its magnitude and duration, and provides the strongest support for the view that the action of nicotine seen here is almost entirely due to the release of acetylcholine.

Many of the effects of acetylcholine which are exerted in the brain are stimulatory, and therefore it can be presumed that many of the effects of nicotine will also be stimulatory. The transmission of impulses in some tracts of the brain, however, is depressed by acetylcholine. Hence it may be expected that some effects of nicotine may also be depressant. This likelihood is of interest because it would help to explain what appears to be a contradiction in the views about the effect of nicotine in man. Nicotine is described by some as a stimulant, but by others as having a tranquillizing effect. Nicotine may in fact turn out to be stimulating and also tranquillizing according to the conditions, if its main action is explained by a release of acetylcholine.

Further evidence for this mode of action comes from studies on the blood pressure. Recent observations at Harrogate have shown that when nicotine is injected into the ventricle of the brain of the cat, a fall in blood pressure occurs. The fall is augmented when physostigmine is injected, so confirming the suggestion that nicotine is producing a part or all of its effect by releasing acetylcholine.

The fall of blood pressure recorded at Harrogate is of interest for the reason that nicotine has long been regarded as a substance which causes a rise of blood pressure, and this is the effect ordinarily seen when nicotine is injected into a vein. But work by myself and others has shown that the injection of nicotine into an artery of a limb usually produces a fall of pressure and a dilation of the vessels in the tissues which the artery supplies.

When a rise of blood pressure occurs it is commonly due to increased action of the sympathetic nervous system, such as occurs with increased emotion, whether of anger or of fear. On the other hand, when a fall of blood pressure occurs, there is often tranquillization. For example, the drug reserpine lowers the blood pressure and causes tranquillization, and likewise barbiturates which lower the blood pressure cause tranquillization. Again the fall in blood pressure and the tranquillization are due to diminished sympathetic activity.

It seems possible, and indeed probable, that the effect of smoking cigarettes on the blood pressure will vary according to the circum-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stances. It is conceivable that in ordinary calm conditions, nicotine will cause a rise of pressure accompanied by stimulation. On the other hand when smoking is begun at a time of emotional stress, there may be a fall of blood pressure, and alleviation of the sense of stress. Thus the observations recently made suggest that it may be possible to harmonize what have hitherto seemed to be contradictory beliefs concerning the effects of smoking cigarettes.

The effect of nicotine on the efficiency with which rats acquire a learned response has been determined by the Italian pharmacologist and Nobel laureate, Bovet. He put rats in a cage, through the floor of which an electric current was passed. The rats escaped the shock by jumping up a pole. Warning of the passage of the current was given by a light which was switched on five seconds before the current was passed. He determined the percentage of trials in which the rat responded to the light and escaped shock. Each rat was tested fifty times on five consecutive days. On the first day the rats responded to the light in only a small percentage of tests, on the next day they responded in a greater percentage, and again on the third day. When a rat was given an injection of nicotine before the tests began, the percentage of responses to the light was notably increased, particularly on the second and third days. These observations were made in 96 rats injected with nicotine (0.2 mg/kg), and compared with 96 controls. The nicotine increased the response to the light by 25 per cent, though it had a much greater effect in those rats which were unusually slow to learn. In such animals nicotine increased the response by more than 100 per cent.

In the Harrogate laboratories interesting results have been obtained by a completely different method. Rats are kept without water for 21 hours and at the end of this time they are eager to drink. They are put in a box which has a hole at one side through which the rat puts its head, where it can find a limited amount of water in a cup when the cup is raised into position. There is a lever in the wall of the cage near the hole, and when the rat presses the lever the cup is raised. The rat is first trained to learn that pressing the lever gives it the chance to get water. Some rats learn this very quickly, while some are very slow. When the rats had learned that water could be obtained on pressing the lever, some rats were given water, not when they pressed the lever, but at varying intervals which had an average duration of two minutes. These rats then pressed the lever at a fairly steady rate, rarely exceeding 15 times a minute, in an attempt to secure a drink. When they were fully trained to do this, records were taken on a day when each rat was kept in the box for 90 minutes

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

after receiving a control injection of an isotonic salt solution which has no pharmacological action. The number of times it pressed the lever, and the number of times it received water, were recorded automatically for nine successive 10-minute periods. The same rat was tested in the same way on the following day after receiving an injection of nicotine. The lowest dose of nicotine was 0.05 mg per kg. This dose, and one twice as great, always caused an increase in the rate at which the rat pressed the lever, its performance being compared with that on the previous day. The increase is shown in Figure 2.

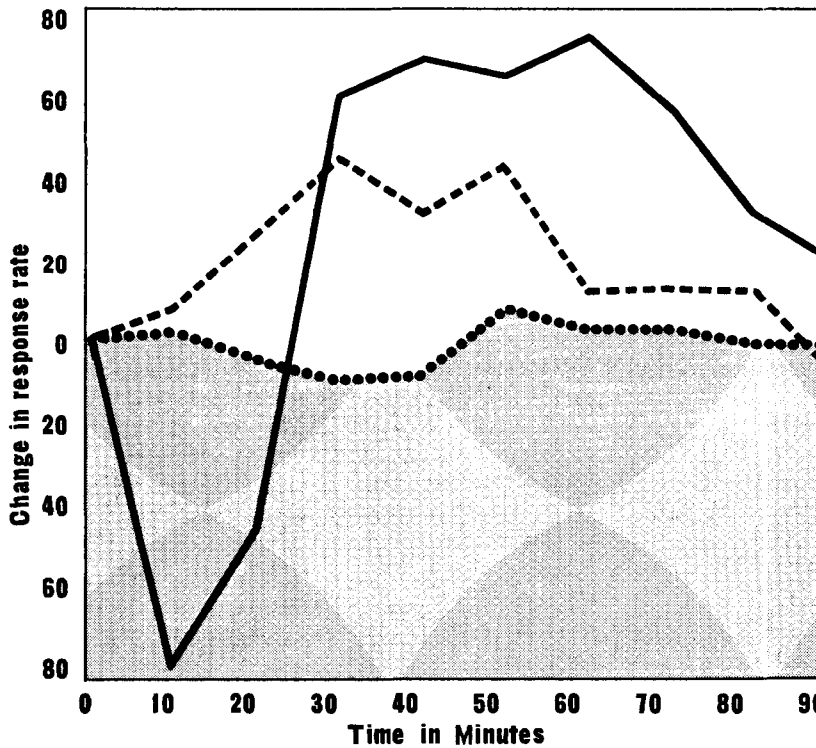


Figure 2 The line of dots shows the mean number of times 8 rats pressed the lever on the day when each rat received a control injection of saline. The broken line shows the mean number of times the 8 rats pressed the lever when each rat received an injection of 0.1 mg/kg nicotine. The full line shows the mean number of times the 8 rats pressed the lever when each rat received an injection of 0.4 mg/kg nicotine

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A higher dose (0.4 mg per kg) had a different effect. During the first 20 minutes after they were injected, the rate was first decreased, but greatly increased. (See Figure 2.) The stimulant effect of nicotine in rats tested in this way was slightly greater than that of the stimulant drug amphetamine.

In a second type of experiment the rats had to press the lever either 15, 30 or 50 times for each reward. In this experiment the rats usually pressed the lever at a much faster rate than in the first experiment, although some rats gave up pressing the lever when the reward was presented only every 30th or 50th time. The same four doses of nicotine were tested, and their effects differed according to the rats. Some rats were slow workers in control conditions, while some were fast workers. Rats which were slow, never pressing the lever at an average rate of more than 30/min, were stimulated by nicotine in much the same way as that described in the first experiment. Only the highest doses of nicotine caused any depression, and this was transient as before. In rats which normally pressed the lever rapidly with a maximum rate over 30 or 40/min (in some cases reaching over 100/min) even the lowest dose of nicotine reduced the rate of lever pressing. The effects of amphetamine were very similar to those of nicotine on both the "slow" and "fast" rats.

There are good reasons for believing that the smallest dose of nicotine (0.05 mg/kg) which resulted in an increase in the rate of lever pressing is roughly equivalent to a "smoking dose." The highest dose of 0.4 mg/kg which resulted in a reduced rate of lever pressing before stimulation, may be a mildly toxic one.

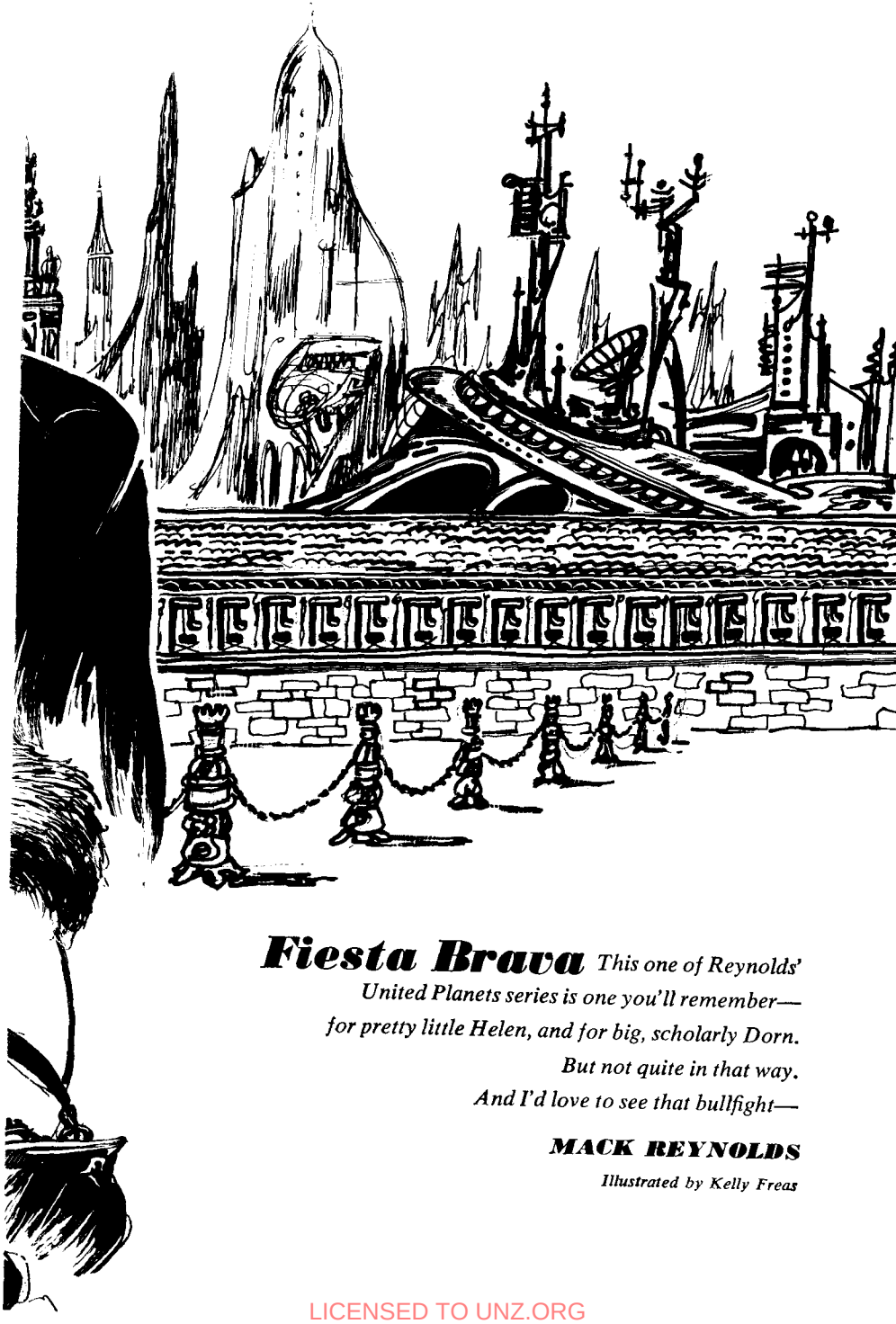
The results of these experiments showed that small amounts of nicotine increased the rate at which the rats pressed the lever to obtain water. The rats were eager to obtain water and the increase in pressing under the influence of nicotine suggests that nicotine increased their determination to work to get water. This would seem to parallel the effect of cigarette smoking in man, whereby he is able to concentrate more effectively on work, either mental or physical, which requires attention over a period of time.

There is thus a growing body of experimental evidence to support the impression that smoking can induce tranquillity or increase efficiency, according to the circumstances.

Professor Burn is Emeritus Professor of Pharmacology in Oxford University, and Visiting Professor in Pharmacology, Washington University, St Louis. He received his medical training at Cambridge and Guy's Hospital, London. He is a prolific author within his own field, and has been honoured by numerous universities and learned societies throughout the world. Lately he has turned his talent to writing about medical affairs for the layman. He has two sons and four daughters, and now lives with his second wife in Oxford. Professor Burn became a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1942, and has served on the Council.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Fiesta Brava

This one of Reynolds' United Planets series is one you'll remember—for pretty little Helen, and for big, scholarly Dorn. But not quite in that way. And I'd love to see that bullfight—

MACK REYNOLDS

Illustrated by Kelly Freas

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For once, Supervisor Sid Jakes of Section G, Bureau of Investigation, Department of Justice, Commissariat of Interplanetary Affairs, was flabbergasted. Gone as the snows of yesteryear was the easygoing, happy-go-lucky expression on his face.

He said blankly, "You mean Supervisor Li Chang Chu sent you people for this Falange assignment?"

The large one, who had named himself Dorn Horsten, nodded seriously. His facial muscles would perhaps have been hard put to register anything other than stolid sincerity. "That is correct, Citizen Jakes."

The Section G official looked at him in puzzlement. "Horsten . . . Horsten. Dorn Horsten. You're not Dr. Horsten, the algae specialist?"

"That is correct."

"But . . . but what are you doing in my office? In Section G? Li Chang was shaping up a small troupe for me to send to a far-out planet that's been giving us a hard time."

Horsten nodded. "I understand the size of your organization precludes you knowing all your agents, Supervisor Jakes. I was recruited by Ronny Bronston, after he had saved my life under somewhat remarkable circumstances. Although I embrace the purpose of Section G as ardently as any other agent, thus far I have been utilized on only two assignments."

Sid Jakes shook his head and turned to the middle-aged couple seated sedately before his desk. The woman was small and demure, the man on the plumpish side. There was the feeling of servants; long years in service—he perhaps a butler, she a maid or cook.

"And you two also are Section G agents?"

"We three," the man said.

Sid Jakes stared at the little girl in her pink go-to-party dress, a blue ribbon in her neatly combed blond hair to match her baby-blue eyes.

He blurted, "How in the world did you get past the Octagon guards with that child?"

The child tinkled a laugh.

The woman said, "Helen is . . . is it twenty-five?"

"Twenty-six," Helen said. She made a childish face at Sid Jakes, who blinked.

The woman, who had been introduced as Martha Lorans, said, "Helen isn't really our daughter, of course. It's camouflage. In putting the team together, Li Chang thought it would go far as protective coloring."

"Especially," Helen said, "since otherwise I'm so conspicuous."

"But . . . then you're a midget," Sid Jakes blurted.

"Not exactly," the seeming child said, an element of irritation in her voice. "There's a situation on our planet that thus far our research people haven't solved. For that matter, we are not so sure we wish

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to solve it. What is the basis of this belief that people should strive to be taller? Why was the Viking the ideal, rather than the Japanese?"

"For one thing," Dr. Dorn Horsten said, deadpanned, "the Viking could clobber the Japanese."

She looked over at him and snorted. "Not always, you big lummox. It was the Jap who perfected judo and karate, remember. But even if it was true that in the old days of swords and spears the large man dominated the small, we don't use such weapons today."

"What started all this jetsam?" Sid Jakes said. The interview had a feeling of unreality so far as he was concerned. He had more than an averagely serious situation on his hands, and had requested a team of trained Section G operatives. His colleague, Li Chang Chu, had sent him what would appear an average middle-aged family, man, woman and eight-year-old, and a staid, though admittedly king-sized, scientist of interplanetary reputation.

Helen said, "I was just telling you that on my home planet, of Gandharvas, we are small in stature, as averages go, and we also are long-lived and mature rather slowly, insofar as appearance is concerned. In my case, and under these circumstances, I also, of course, am relying upon children's clothes, a child's hairdo, and even a certain amount of cosmetic to put over the effect desired."

"The effect desired?" Sid Jakes said blankly. "What in the name of the Holy Ultimate did Li Chang think the effect desired was? I need a troupe of agents, tough agents, to lick the situation on Falange."

"How tough?" Helen said sweetly. She had allowed the childish lisp to return to her voice.

It was a matter of exasperation now. Sid Jakes glared at her. "Tougher than any seeming eight-year-old kid could handle," he snapped. "Listen, they're onto Section G on this planet Falange. We've lost three agents there in the past year and a half. In each case they were unmasked and brought to trial on trumped-up charges. One was accused of murder, one of subversion and the other disrespect of the Caudillo; all capital offenses. Their *Policía Secreta* is one of the most efficient in the some three thousand member worlds of United Planets. They ought to be, they've had enough practice. And now they're just sitting there, waiting for the next batch of Section G operatives to show up."

Sid Jakes came to his feet suddenly, paced around the desk and up and down the floor, in sheer disgust. "It's going to be a neat trick to even land there, not to speak of overthrowing the crackpot government."

"Overthrowing the government?" Pierre Lorans said interestedly. "Li Chang didn't tell us what the assignment involved."

The Section G supervisor turned

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on him. "I suppose that if you've made agent in this bureau, you must have something on the ball. What did you do before you were recruited?"

"I was, and am, a chef," Lorans said.

"A chef!" Jakes rolled his eyes upward in search of divine guidance. Then he looked at the drab appearing woman. "And you?"

"I'm a housewife."

"A housewife. Holy Jumping Zen. Except for the training I *assume* Li Chang put you through before making you a full agent, did you have any earlier background that would . . ."

She shook her head. "No. Not exactly."

He rounded the desk again and plumped himself down in his swivel chair. He closed his eyes and said, "I give up. I surrender. Three of our best agents down the drain and to replace them I get a double-domed scientist, a pint-sized girl in a baby getup, a chef and a housewife."

Dr. Dorn Horsten lumbered to his feet. He was a big man, at least six-four and some two hundred and forty pounds. However, his conservative dress, his pince-nez glasses and his scholarly facial expression, tended to offset his size.

He said gently, "Helen, I suppose we should make some effort to indicate why Li Chang Chu chose us for the assignment."

The little girl looked up at him in wide-eyed innocence. "Allez oop!" she tinkled suddenly.

In a blur of motion, the hulking scientist reached down and grabbed her by the feet, swung her mightily, in a giant circle, launched her brutally at the far wall, head first.

Sid Jakes's eyes bugged. He came halfway to his feet, froze there momentarily, sank back again.

She turned in the air, her small arms tucked around her knees, hit the wall, feet first, bounced upward, hit the ceiling, feet first, ricocheted off to a set of steel files, bounced onto the desk of the Section G supervisor, seemed to go up into the air and spin around three times. She wound up sitting on his shoulder, his paperknife in her tiny, chubby hand. The point of the paper knife was behind his right ear.

Dr. Dorn Horsten nonchalantly picked up Sid Jakes's ultra-large steel desk, tucked it under his left arm and walked over to the wall where he leaned, on his right hand, still holding the desk.

Horsten said mildly, "The widely held prejudice that double-domes—I believe was your term—don't have muscles fails to stand up on my home world of Ftörsta, Citizen Jakes. You see, we have a 1.6 G planet. On top of that, the original colonists were, ah, nature boys, I believe is the usual term of contempt. At any rate, in the same manner that Helen's world possibly has the smallest average citizen in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

United Planets, surely Ftörsta has the strongest."

Sid Jakes was still in a condition of shock.

He blatted, "You can't pick that up!"

Dorn Horsten let his eyebrows rise.

"It must weigh a ton!" Jakes protested.

"I doubt it," Horsten said. "It doesn't have the heft."

Helen, with a skip and a jump, bounced from her superior's shoulder to the floor and in a graceful, flowing motion, back into the chair she had originally occupied.

The overgrown doctor returned the desk to its place, an apologetic air about him. "It speeds things up, sometimes, to be a bit melodramatic," he said.

Sid Jakes closed his eyes and rubbed them with his right hand. He opened them again and looked accusingly at Mr. and Mrs. Pierre Lorans.

Pierre Lorans shifted in his chair slightly and said, "I throw things."

"I'll bet you do," Jakes muttered. And then, "What do you mean, you throw things? Why?"

"Well, it's always been a hobby. Ever since childhood I've got a kick out of throwing things." He came to his feet and approached the Section G official's desk. "For instance," he said and picked up the paperknife.

The office of Sid Jakes was done with a British Victorian revival motif. At the far end of the more than averagely large room was an antique calendar.

"For instance," Lorans repeated and suddenly flicked the paperknife. "It is, June 23rd; old calendar, isn't it?"

Jakes's eyes went to the calendar. "Hey," he said, "that's a collector's item!"

The professional chef took up an ancient pen, a decorative antique on the supervisor's desk. That flicked suddenly too, and also buried itself in the tiny square devoted to June 23rd.

He turned back to his superior. "Just about anything. Knives, spears, hatchets, meat cleavers . . ."

Jakes shuddered.

". . . Ball bearings . . ."

"Ball bearings?" Jakes said.

"Hm-m-m," the plump man fished into his jerkin pocket and came forth with a shiny steel marble. "You'd be surprised what you can do with a ball bearing. See the right eye in that portrait down there?"

"Oh no, you don't . . ." Jakes said much too late.

The ball bearing instead of bouncing off, penetrated the eye completely and evidently imbedded itself in the wall.

". . . Baseballs," Lorans was saying, "boomerangs, shovels, crowbars, wrenches—"

"Shovels!" Jakes said. "All right, all right. Sit down. Don't throw

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

anything else. I accept your word." He bent his eye on Mrs. Lorans. "Do you throw things, too, or is it only a one-member-of-the-family vice?"

"Oh, no," she said primly. "Pierre and I met at the Special Talents class of Supervisor Li Chang . . ."

"Is *that* where she dug you all up?" he muttered. "I'm going to have to find the time to look into that pet project of Li Chang's."

"We attended at the same time. I'd never seen anyone throw things before. Not like Pierre does. You should see him throw a fork."

Sid Jakes looked pained and muttered something about inviting the other to dinner, but then he said, aloud, "And your, ah, Special Talent?"

"Well," she came to her feet and approached the antique bookshelves, pursed her lips and selected a volume of the "Encyclopaedia Britannica."

"Holy Jumping Zen," Jakes snapped. "Easy with that. It's worth its weight in platinum. Don't throw it."

"I wasn't going to throw it," she said. She put it down on the desk, opened it at random, spent possibly one flat second scanning the page and then pushed the book in front of Jakes and returned to her chair.

He stared at her.

Her eyes went vague and she began to recite. ". . . *which is shown a lion holding a sword. The whole has a border of yellow. This flag was first hoisted on the morning of February 4, 1948 and became . . .*"

She droned on and on.

Sid Jakes scowled, looked from one of the four to the other, finally looked down at the book. He blinked.

Mrs. Pierre Lorans was reciting, word for word, the "Encyclopedia's" article on flags—word for word and without a single mistake.

"All right," he interrupted finally. He looked at her accusingly. "You could do the whole page?"

"Yes."

"You could do the whole 'Encyclopedia'?" he said unbelievingly.

"If I scanned each page."

"Holy Ultimate, why don't you rent yourself out as a computer memory bank?"

"I have held somewhat equivalent positions," she said.

Sid Jakes sat there for a long moment, looking at them. Finally he said, "Forgive me, but frankly you four are the most unlikely set of freaks I've ever had in my office."

Dr. Dorn Horsten said stolidly, "Actually, we are not as far out as all that. It is just that you are seeing us all together. In truth, man has always been a freak among animals. Even right here on Earth, in the old days were men who trained themselves to the point where they could pick up four thousand pounds —two tons. There were others who

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could run down a wild horse and capture it. There were gymnasts who could put a monkey to shame. There were others with eidetic memories, such as Lord MacCauley; still others with freak brains who could do fantastic mathematical problems in their heads. I will not even mention various well authenticated psi phenomena, ranging from levitation to clairvoyance."

Sid Jakes pushed his hand back through his hair and said, "All right. But the thing is, what'd Li Chang have in mind when she sent you here?"

Helen looked at him mockingly, her childish eyes bright. "But you have already mentioned the reason. How did you put it? The *Policía Secreta* of the planet Falange is onto Section G and they're just sitting there waiting for the next batch of agents to show up."

He blinked at her.

She shrugged tiny shoulders. "Did you expect your next troupe to be able to land with Model H guns and all the gadgets of the Department of Dirty Tricks? They'd be detected before the ship ever set down."

Some of Sid Jakes's natural exuberance returned to him. "Holy Ultimate," he muttered. "At least they're going to have some surprises coming. But what's the excuse for you going to Falange? They don't welcome strangers. Tourists are not allowed. They're one of the most backward worlds in United Planets and want to keep it that way."

Horsten said, "All worlds settled by man owe their existence to the chlorophyll containing plants. All of them have problems involving algae. Citizen Jakes, I do not know of a world that has any science whatsoever that would not welcome a visit by Dorn Horsten. Excuse me, I speak in all modesty. The slightest drop of a hint to a colleague on Falange, and I would be overwhelmed with invitations."

"Hm-m-m," Sid Jakes said. "I suppose you're right." He looked at Pierre Lorans.

The plump man who loved to throw things, puffed out his cheeks. A certain Gallic quality seemed to come over him. He said pompously, "I am a *Nouveau Cordon Bleu* chef. One of my specialties is the dishes of the Iberian peninsula. I assure you, my *paella* is unsurpassed. At this time, however, many of the dishes once famed in Spain now continue only on the planet Falange where they were taken centuries ago when that world was colonized. Citizen Jakes, there are few, if any, worlds where a *Cordon Bleu* chef would be unwelcome. Haute cuisine is one of the gentler arts. I will arrive with the announced intention of studying the dishes of Falange, but I shall also give of my knowledge and skill to chefs residing there. I will, of course, be accompanied by my

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

somewhat, ah, forgive me Martha, colorless wife, and my little girl. What could be more innocent?"

Sid Jakes took them all in again, one by one. He grinned. "It'll be a neat trick," he said. Then, "Let me brief you on the situation." He squirmed nervously in his chair, more his old self at last. He said, "You know, most people are in favor of progress. Of course, it's an elastic term. For instance, some centuries ago early nuclear physicists devised a method of splitting the atom. Their discoveries were turned over to the military which utilized them to blow up a couple of cities. It all came under the head of progress. Earlier still, missionaries landed on the islands of the South Pacific. Within a century, the populations had been decimated; however, they had been baptized before succumbing to tuberculosis, syphilis, measles and the wearing of Mother Hubbards in that climate, so the missionaries considered it progress."

Martha Lorans laughed, displaying a desirable side of her that had thus far been hidden.

Sid Jakes said, "However, *all* people are not in favor of progress. And the ruling elite of Falange are among them. Have any of you ever heard of the Spanish Civil War?"

The three Lorans shook their heads but Dr. Horsten scowled seriously and said, "Slightly. Nineteenth or twentieth century, old calendar, wasn't it?"

Jakes said, "It was a strange war. Supposedly a civil war, it was actually a preliminary conflict preceding a global one. Spain was used as a proving ground for weapons and troops and tens of thousands of Europeans, Asiatics and Americans swarmed there to participate. It was a brutal war and devastated Spain. When the smoke cleared, the forces of *der Führer* and *Il Duce* had enabled the more reactionary elements to come to power under their own dictator, El Caudillo.

"However, no problem is ever settled until it is settled right, and the elements that had achieved power under the Caudillo were not those needed for the country to develop. The government and the socioeconomic system were anachronisms and it began to show. While the rest of Europe snowballed into the Second Industrial Revolution, Spain remained stationary. Soon, the more intelligent and trained elements in the country realized the situation and began to take what action they could. The very things that El Caudillo had won on the battlefields, he lost in the day-by-day developments of civilian life. Uneducated peasants cannot be trusted to operate machinery. Schools had to go up. Underpaid workers are inefficient —they don't eat well enough. Pay began to go up. Tourists don't come to countries where there are terrifying secret police everywhere. The *Guardia Civil* was cut down

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

numerically, and no longer paraded the roads and bridges openly armed with submachine guns. Slowly, the Caudillo's victory was eroding away.

"Most of the Spanish, of course, were profiting by this and most were pleased. Spain eventually boomed to the point where it entered Common Europe. However, there was a hard core element that objected. They lived in the past and wanted to stay there. They had won their reactionary war behind the Caudillo and demanded that what they had won be forever observed. When this became impossible, in Europe, they became one of the first groups to colonize another world—Falange."

Little Helen was frowning. "I can see these stick-in-the-muds wanting to maintain their old privileges, their positions of power. I can see them deciding to migrate to a new planet where they could, uh, go to hell in their own way. But I can't imagine them getting any peasants, servants and so forth to go with them. And a ruling elite is no longer a ruling elite, unless it has somebody to rule."

Jakes chuckled. "Then you're wrong, my dear. In any given social system, the majority of the ruled *like* to be ruled in the manner in which they are being ruled. Otherwise, they'd do something about it. Under slavery, the majority liked being slaves, or they would have taken measures to end the situation. Under feudalism, the serfs, the artisans in the towns, the middle-class merchants all *liked* being ruled by the aristocracy. When they stopped liking it they stormed the palaces and some clever chap invented the guillotine to speed matters up."

Helen made a face. "I suppose you're right," she said, "but you'd have one damn rough time making a slave or serf of me."

Jakes chuckled again. He was beginning to like this pint-sized operative. "I am sure you would either become free or die in the attempt, and, of course, a dead slave is not a slave. At any rate, our malcontents were able to recruit all the elements they needed for their new colony. Several thousand strong, they migrated. Their new society was dedicated to the past and the prevention of change. And there it is today."

"And that's where we come in," Dr. Horsten said. "But why?"

Sid Jakes looked at him. "Surely you know that. You're a Section G agent."

Pierre Lorans said, "Obviously, we know the reason for the existence of this cloak-and-dagger department. It is to forward the progress of the worlds settled by man so that we will be as strong as possible, as a life form, when our inevitable confrontation with the intelligent aliens beyond takes place. But why the need to over-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

throw the government of Falange?"

The Section G supervisor nodded. "Whether they want to be forwarded or not, and most of them don't, our task is to push into progress our member planets. Nothing is clung to so assiduously as socio-economic systems, and nothing can become so detrimental to progress. The immediate factor that motivates us is that the most highly industrialized planets, for example Avalon and Catalina, are somewhat desperately in need of various rare metals that are present in ample supply on Falange. Mining methods are so primitive there that unless she is more highly industrialized and welcomes in engineers from more advanced worlds, these minerals will never be exploited."

Dr. Horsten had taken his pince-nez glasses from his nose and was polishing them. "Very well, our task will be to overthrow this restrictive government and establish a new regime more conducive to progress."

Sid Jakes looked at the four of them doubtfully. It was, of course, partly their clothing and deliberate effort to look harmless. But for the moment a more unlikely group of revolutionists could hardly be imagined.

Pierre Lorans said, "Just what is their present governmental form?"

"An absolute dictator," Jakes said. "The Caudillo, who rules for life."

Lorans said, "But the regime has been in power for centuries. When the Caudillo dies, how does a new one come in?"

Jakes looked around at them. "The best matador is appointed."

The four stared at him.

"The *what?*" Helen demanded.

"The best bullfighter."

II

It had been decided that there was no particular reason for them to avoid each other in the spaceship *Golden Hind*. The most natural thing for the noted Dr. Dorn Horsten, who was traveling alone, would be to strike up a companionship with Chef Pierre Lorans and his wife, since they were all headed for a common destination, the planet Falange and its capital city Nuevo Madrid.

So it was that early in the journey the doctor introduced himself and soon became the constant companion of the chef who specialized in Iberian dishes. They spent considerable time playing battle chess while Mrs. Lorans read through the ship's tapes, and little Helen played with the scant supply of toys she had been allowed to bring along.

The child was a good-natured, cheerful tike, the other passengers decided, usually with a slight smile on her face as though she was amused by some inner thoughts. She was obviously too young to have much understanding of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

world of adults; and businessmen discussing deals, or diplomats en route from one world to another, paid no attention to her if she sat at their feet during some discussion.

On the third day out, Helen came to where Martha Lorans was rapidly flipping through some tapes. It looked, to an outsider, as though she was quickly scanning, searching for something she wished to read but failing to find anything. The two men, as usual, had their heads over a battlechess board.

Helen said to Martha, "What are you sopping up?"

Martha looked at her, her eyes at first blank, but then clearing as she came into the here and now. "How to run this spaceship," she said.

The little girl winced. "Let's hope it doesn't come to that."

Martha laughed. As always, on her it looked particularly good. "You never know," she said. "There is very little knowledge that is worthless."

"Well, I hope that'll remain so," Helen said. "Look, how about you going to the captain and sending a subspace cable to Avalon for me?"

Dr. Horsten looked up and scowled at her. "Avalon? Why?"

"I want to buy in on a development there."

They were all looking at her now. She looked down at her feet, shod in her little girl shoes, and looked like nothing so much as an eight-year-old asking for a privilege she suspected was going to be denied.

She added, "I have some savings banked in the exchange computers on Terra. I'd like to have them transferred to Avalon and invested with the Sky-High Development Corporation."

Lorans's eyes narrowed. "Why?"

"Oh, I just want to."

Dr. Horsten nodded sourly. "What is this corporation?"

"Oh, it's just in the process of being organized."

"Hm-m-m. And why is it you're so anxious to buy in?"

"Oh, there've been a few rumors around the ship."

Horsten shook his head. "You little sneak. I saw you playing with your doll under the table of those two sharpies from Avalon. Now look, if Martha did make such a purchase then those two businessmen would know there'd been a leak on this ship. The Lorans family would come under suspicion. And we don't want anybody to start wondering about the Lorans family, nor their friend, Dr. Horsten."

"Little sneak," she snorted. "Why, you big ox. I ought to clobber you."

Martha Lorans laughed. "That I'd like to see some day. But Dorn's right, Helen."

Little Helen snorted again, but jumped up into one of the lounge's chairs and spread her dress neatly, the way a precocious child spreads her skirt.

She snarled under her breath, "What the hell's the use of getting onto a good thing, if you're not al-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lowed to profit by it? I could triple my exchange credits."

The others went back to their pursuits.

After a few minutes, Helen sighed and said, "I still don't believe it. Martha, how about reciting that about the bullfighting again."

Martha looked up with a sigh. "All of it?"

"Not all the details about the history of the bullfight. Imagine! That relic of the Roman arena coming down to the twentieth century and beyond."

"Twentieth century," Lorans grunted. "All the way down to the present. At least on Falange."

"It's unbelievable," Helen said. "Imagine those cloddies going to the trouble of freighting enough of these, what was the name of the breed of bull, Martha?"

"Bos taurus ibericus."

"Evidently useless for anything except the so-called fiesta brava. Shipping enough of them all the way from Earth, to stock bull farms."

"Fincas," Martha supplied. "They call bull ranches *fincas."*

"Well," Horsten said, "it's still their national spectacle, their national fascination. Evidently, every Falangist on the planet is an aficionado, a bull fight buff."

"But using it as a method of picking a Chief of State! When the Caudillo dies, that matador pronounced *Número Uno* becomes the new Caudillo. Why, that's chaos! Nothing to do with education or intelligence quotient. Nothing to do with background in governing. Nothing to do with anything save bullfighting. Why, there's nothing so silly in the whole of United Planets."

"I don't know," Pierre Lorans said. "There're some pretty silly methods of selecting those who govern." He looked thoughtful. "A top matador would have to be in physically fine shape. He'd have to be sharp, quick, or he would never have become *Número Uno.* He couldn't be stupid, either, because although a stupid person with good reflexes might survive in the ring for a time, the occasions would come up when he could save himself from disaster only by utilizing intelligence."

"Anything for an argument, eh?" Helen snorted. "Defending the silliest method of selecting a dictator that's ever come down the pike."

Dorn Horsten put down the piece he was holding and said thoughtfully, "What I can't understand is the danger the elite goes through of having one of the under-privileged classes win control. No power elite ever willingly gives up its position. Why, if the wrong man got in there —wrong from their view—he could upset their applecart for all time."

Martha said, or rather recited, "Our information on this aspect of Falange government is scanty. It would seem that one of the factors that keeps the average Falangist

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

contented with the status quo is that every person on the planet, theoretically, has the chance to become Caudillo. When the old Caudillo dies, an enthusiasm sweeps the planet evidently beyond anything known elsewhere in the system in the way of fiestas, Mardi Gras, ferias, carnivals. For weeks, during which the fights are being held, contestants being eliminated, the planet Falange is in a state of euphoria difficult to conceive of on the part of anyone who has not witnessed it."

"That's a point," Horsten said. "If you condone the system, and even enjoy it, and especially if you take part yourself, or support a friend, relation or comrade in the fights, you can hardly protest the system later." He took up the chess piece again and muttered thoughtfully, "I still can't imagine the Falange powers that would be taking the chance of a peasant, or unskilled worker, becoming Caudillo."

Helen evidently grew suddenly bored and bounced down from her chair. "I think I'll go pester Ferd."

Dorn Horsten scowled at her. "Who?"

Martha looked at Helen. "You mean that brain surgeon?"

"Ferdinand Zogbaum," Helen said. "But he's not a brain surgeon, he's some sort of electronics wizard."

"Not necessarily mutually exclusive," Horsten said seriously. "What is the attraction of Citizen Zogbaum?"

Helen giggled. "Well, for one thing, he's the nearest thing to a man my size on board."

Pierre Lorans looked at her accusingly. "Pester him, is right. I saw you sitting on his lap yesterday, pulling at the poor cloddy's cravat and him trying to carry on a serious conversation with the second officer."

Helen said, "He's cute."

Martha snorted. "Cute! He looks like a half-sized Lincoln."

Helen started out the compartment entry. She said over her shoulder, "If he'd stop wearing those elevator heels, he'd be almost just right."

Pierre looked after her and said thoughtfully, "That little witch is going to make a mistake and bust up the whole act one of these days."

Horsten shrugged. "It must be difficult. She can't allow herself to be seen participating in any adult activity. How would you like to be in a spot where you couldn't even read? At least nothing but children's tapes."

The arrival at the Nuevo Madrid spaceport, the only entry point to Falange, was even less eventful than they had hoped for. Their coming, of course, was anticipated. Securing a visa at the Falange Embassy on Terra was no small matter. No one, but no one, arrived unannounced on Falange.

There was a delegation of biochemists from the University, breathless at meeting the celebrated

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dr. Dorn Horsten. He was hustled off to a group of horse-drawn *carruajes*.

The Lorans family looked after him.

"Holy Ultimate," Helen said under her breath. "I never expected to see a landau pulled by a span of horses anywhere except in a Tri-Di historical."

"Well, get ready to ride in one," Martha told her. "It seems to be the method of transportation locally."

They were being approached by what were obviously Customs and Immigration officials, done up in costumes seemingly out of the Iberia of the nineteenth century, but also by two civilians wearing clothing of the diplomats of the Victorian period.

"Here we go," Pierre Lorans said. He puffed his cheeks up and went into his Gallic facial expression.

Helen said to Martha, her voice still low, "Look. Evidently, Ferd Zogbaum has been snagged by the local fuzz-yoke."

Martha turned her eyes in the indicated direction. The young electronics engineer, or whatever he was, was being marched in the direction of some very military looking buildings at the far end of the field. The guards, in their *Guardia Civil* uniforms, complete with hard, black hats, were, however, carrying his bags.

Martha said, "Probably some minor technicality in his papers. He doesn't seem particularly worried." Their own delegation was nearly to them. Martha's voice changed in caliber. "Now sweetie, be quiet for a while. Mummie and Daddy have to talk to these nice gentlemen."

"Curd," Helen said under her breath.

The uniformed men after well executed bows and murmured politenesses, took over passports, interplanetary health cards and the rest of the red-tape documents involved in aliens landing upon the planet Falange. The civilians, it turned out, were members of the cultural affairs department of the Caudillo's government.

While the papers were being perused and stamped, they made meaningless conversation and minor gushings of welcome. When the papers were obviously approved, the gushing became more pronounced.

Martha even got her hand kissed.

In a sudden childish burst of enthusiasm, Helen jumped up and put her arms around the neck of one of the Falangists, her sturdy little legs about his waist.

"Oh, isn't he a *nice* man!"

Martha said, "Helen!"

The cultural aide blinked, smiled in attempted acceptance, and put his hands under the little girl's bottom, as though to support her weight. The vaguest of incomprehensible expressions crossed his face momentarily.

Pierre Lorans grabbed Helen and pulled her away. "Don't be so impulsive, chocolate drop," he scolded.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Evidently, the Terran Embassy of Falange had forwarded full information on the highly noted *Nouveau Cordon Bleu* chef, Pierre Lorans. It was a pleasure to welcome such an artist of haute cuisine to Falange. It was thought possible that he would be invited to an audience with El Caudillo himself.

El Caudillo was extremely fond of Basque cuisine. Perhaps Senor Lorans . . .

Senor Lorans puffed out his cheeks. "Gentlemen, I am perhaps the most proficient preparer of *bacalao a la vizcaina* and *angulas a la bilbaino* in all the United Planets."

The one who had introduced himself as Manola Camino, looked blank. "But Senor Lorans, we have neither codfish nor eels on Falange. These dishes we know of only through traditions and the writings brought with us from Earth."

Lorans glared at him in indignation. "No *bacalao*, no *angulas!* Are you barbarians? How can your . . . ah . . . Caudillo, or whatever you call him, be a connoisseur of Basque food if you have no *bacalao*, no *angulas?*" He sneered openly. "Next you will tell me you have no beans for *fabada!*

The Falangist winced, opened his mouth unhappily, closed it again.

The other cultural aide said hurriedly, "Perhaps we had better proceed to the Posada."

They led the way, the Lorans trailing after.

Martha said from the side of her mouth, "Listen, you show-off cloddy, aren't you overdoing it?"

"No," he said back. "It's all in character."

Helen skipped as they went, singing, in her tinkle of a child's voice, something about three little girls in blue.

Senor Manola Camino led the way to two of the horse-drawn carriages which seemed the local equivalent of taxis and they were shortly underway. There were comparatively few powered vehicles on the streets of Nuevo Madrid, and it came to them that these few must be imports and almost exclusively for police, military and, perhaps, the highest ranking authorities. The planet Falange lived in the day of the horse.

It came to them, also, that the Posada San Francisco was the only hotel in the city that catered to aliens. Either that, or it was the best hostelry in town and VIPs were automatically taken there. At any rate, they could see Dr. Horsten at the desk, still surrounded by his bevy of welcoming scientists. And while they went through their own routine of registering, they saw Ferdinand Zogbaum enter, still accompanied by his two police.

Their schedule didn't begin until the next day, when Lorans was to have a tour of the leading restaurants of Nuevo Madrid. As soon as they were delivered to their suite, and their guides had bowed their way out, they began to make the usual sounds of unpacking.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The rooms were monstrous in size. A living room, two bedrooms and a rather antiquated bath. The antiquated quality prevailed in general, giving the impression it was deliberately laid on. Even the furniture was Victorian in design. The ceilings were more than thrice as high as could have been expected in population packed Earth and there was a wood-burning fireplace.

While Martha and Helen did the unpacking, Pierre made a tour of the suite, jabbering along as he went.

"Now dear," Martha said shrilly, "please stay out of Mother's way."

Helen snarled softly at her.

Pierre said, "Did you hear that drivel? Do they think me a dunderhead? How can one cook in the fashion of the Basques without *bacalao?"*

"Now dear, you know perfectly well they were very pleasant. And it was nice to meet us out there on that terrible expanse of cement and all."

Helen shrilled, "Three little girls in blue, tra la. Three little girls in blue!"

Pierre spotted what he was looking for. At the very top of the chain from which the chandelier was suspended. Right at the ceiling, a good twenty feet above them. He pointed and they looked up.

There was no apparent way in which any of them could reach the bug. No combination of furniture, piled atop each other. Martha nodded to Pierre.

Pierre Lorans took a ballbearing from his pocket. Seconds later, he said with satisfaction, "I doubt if there's any more."

Helen said, "Look, for a day or two, we're going to be safe. They won't get around to suspecting a thing, not even a broken bug. And until tomorrow, when you'll have your time monopolized, we're free. We better get busy tonight."

"At what?" Martha said. "They didn't give us a clue on how we were to begin this big subversion fling, back on Earth. You'd think Jakes would have something for us to start with. Somebody to see."

Helen snapped chubby fingers. "That's it. We've got to find the local underground."

Pierre Lorans looked at her. "Wonderful. How do we go about that? What local underground?"

"There must be one. Given any government at all and there's some opposition. It might be large or it might be small, but somewhere on Falange there's an underground."

Martha said slowly, "You're probably right, but how to get in touch is another thing. If the *Policía Secreta* can't find them, how can we?"

Something came to Helen. "Those former three agents from Section G. What was it Sid Jakes said happened to them?"

Martha's eyes took on their empty look. She recited, *"In each case they were unmasked, in one manner or the other, and brought to*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trial on trumped-up charges. One was accused of murder; one of subversion; and the other disrespect of the Caudillo; all capital offenses."

"O.K.," Helen said, an edge of excitement in her voice. "That's it. One of them was charged with subversion. A man doesn't commit subversion on his own. He works with a group, a party, an underground organization of some sort or other."

"So," Lorans scowled.

"So that Section G operative wasn't tried alone. There had to be others involved. Others captured at the same time. It's almost sure to be."

"Perhaps," Martha said. "But, if so, what of it? Surely they've all been executed by now."

"Not necessarily," Helen insisted. "They would execute the Section G agent quickly before United Planets took some measures to free him. But their own citizens they might keep alive in hopes of squeezing information out of them."

"Hm-m-m," Lorans said.

Martha said, "But what of it?"

"Don't you see? Somewhere there are trial records. If we can get hold of them, we can locate where these companions of our Section G agent are. What prison they're in."

Martha and Pierre Lorans were both unhappy now. They thought about it.

"We don't even know where the court records might be—if any," Lorans objected. "For all we know, the trial was secret."

Helen said decisively, "That's for you to find out. This afternoon take a guided tour. Those culture department aides are just dying to show you the sights. Among them will be the Caudillo's palace, the post office, the museum and city hall. If you can, worm out of them just where the archives are. It shouldn't be too hard if you blather along like usual sightseers. And the Holy Ultimate knows, no two persons in United Planets can blather like you two."

Pierre Lorans aimed a backhanded swipe at her, knowing perfectly well it would never connect.

Helen bounced back, tinkling laughter.

Martha said, "How about you?"

"Tell them I'm tired and don't want to leave the hotel. You might even hint it's a relief to get away from me, after the long trip. Meanwhile, I'll see Dorn and tell him what's up."

Martha and Pierre Lorans looked at each other. "I can't think of anything else," he admitted.

Helen was already out of the room and on her way down to the lobby.

She met Ferdinand Zogbaum coming up the wide stairway, the two police and several bellhops with luggage trailing him.

She grabbed him about the waist. "Uncle Ferd, why are those nasty policemen always following you!"

Martha had been right. Ferdinand Zogbaum looked nothing so much as the youthful Lincoln, cut down

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

almost half in stature. Now he was flushing. He looked apologetically over his shoulder at the two *Guardia Civil*. The whole party had ground to a halt under the child's assault.

He patted her on the head. "Now, now, Helen. I'm not being arrested. They're friends."

"They're policemen," Helen shrilled. "Mommy told me they were policemen. Why are they following you, Uncle Ferd?"

One of the guards was grinning his amusement, the other was only bored.

Ferd Zogbaum cleared his throat unhappily, and patted her head again. "They're guarding me, honey. Don't you worry. Your Uncle Ferd is a very important man brought all the way from Terra for a special job, so he had to have these big policemen guard him so he can't come to any harm."

"Is that straight?" she said under her breath into his ear.

He blinked. "What?" he said, unbelievingly.

"I love you, Uncle Ferd," she said, her voice high again. "You be sure you say good-bye to me before you go anywhere away from the hotel. Or I'll go run to the United Planets Embassy and tell everybody you've been kidnapped. I can lie real good."

The bored guard became animated enough to scowl.

Ferd said, "Don't worry. If I leave here, I'll say good-bye to you first."

She pressed her full, cupid bow lips to his cheek and released him and headed down the steps again. For a moment, he looked after her, a strange look on his face. But then he shook his head unbelievingly and resumed his way to his suite, followed by his entourage.

III

Helen skipped into the lobby and up to the desk of the concierge.

"Where's Uncle Dorn?" she trilled.

He looked over the desk and down at her. "Who, Senorita?"

"Uncle Dorn!"

An inconspicuous type who had been standing at a nearby pillar next to a potted fern, strolled over and murmured to the hotel employee.

"Ah, the Senor Doctor. He has retired to his room, little Senorita."

Helen cocked her blond head to one side and eyed him speculatively. Finally she said in her childish treble, "What's all this Senorita and Senor jetsam?"

He looked a bit startled. "Jetsam?"

She looked at him as unblinkingly as only a child can look.

The concierge cleared his throat. "Little girl, when our people came from Earth, long, long ago, Earth-Basic was already the language all spoke. However, as a concession to our traditions we have maintained a few words of the old tongue. Do you understand?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"No," Helen said flatly. "Where is Uncle Dorn?"

The concierge maintained his official aplomb. "He is in Suite A, little Senorita, but I do not think he would wish to be disturbed."

She snorted at that opinion. "He is my Uncle Dorn," she informed him and headed for the stairs. The concierge shrugged and looked at the inconspicuous representative of the *Policía Secreta* who shrugged as well and obviously forgot about it.

Helen located Suite A and pounded a tiny fist on the door. It was answered by one of the Falange scientists who had met the visiting celebrity at the spaceport. Helen slipped under his arm before he had actually seen her.

Dorn Horsten was seated in a Victorian style easy chair, evidently in the midst of earnest conversation with two of the other local biochemists.

"Ah, the little Princess. Are you also stopping at this hotel, my dear? How are your good parents?"

Helen bent a blue eye on him. Obviously, both questions were of too little importance to require answer. She said, "Uncle Dorn, I want a bedtime story."

"A bedtime story?" He looked at his colleagues in apology, and then out the window. "But, little Princess, it is still only afternoon."

"Mommy and Daddy have gone off to look at the buildings or something and left me all alone to take a nap and I want a story."

"But, Helen, I am busy with these gentlemen."

She began to pucker up.

Dorn Horsten cleared his throat and came to his feet. "Now . . . now . . ." he began.

"I don't like it here," she wailed. "I wanna go *home!*"

"Now, now, Helen. Your mother and father will . . ."

"I wanna *bed*time story!" she wailed.

Dorn Horsten looked apologetically at the Falangists. "Senores, if you will pardon me. In actuality, I am a bit weary myself. Perhaps we could postpone our discussion on the phylum *Thallophyta* until tomorrow."

They had all come to feet before his first three words were out. In moments they were gone.

Horsten glared down at the diminutive agent and began to say, "What in the . . ."

She had a finger to her lips.

". . . World kind of bedtime story did you have in mind, little Princess?"

She sneered at him, held her peace for a moment while her baby blue eyes searched the room. Finally, she located the bug. It was in approximately the same position as the one in the Lorans suite which Pierre had broken with his ball bearing. She pointed it out to him with a chubby finger.

Horsten took off his pince-nez glasses and wiped them, his eyebrows up.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Would you like the story about Allez oop?" he said in the tone one uses with an eight-year-old.

"No, no, Uncle Dorn. That's the one you always tell. I want a different one. You come to our place and tell me a different one."

He sighed deeply. "All right, all right, little Princess."

"I'm not so little, Uncle Dorn." As though to prove it, she went over to the table bearing the bottle of cognac, poured herself a hefty slug and knocked it back.

He followed her to the door and down the hall toward the Lorans suite.

"There was one in our place, too," she said lowly. "Pierre broke it. It would be too much of a good thing if we broke the one in your suite as well."

He grunted concern. "I don't like this. Rooms bugged already. You think they suspect us?"

She shrugged tiny shoulders. They were proceeding down the hall, hand in hand, a pretty picture of an oversized man and a trusting child. "They probably keep a twenty-four hour watch on every alien on Falange. They didn't particularly pick on us."

He growled, "That'll mean we'll have tails, too. Restrict our movements."

They reached the door of the Lorans suite and entered.

Helen told him where Pierre and Martha had gone and he thought about it a while and nodded acceptance. "It'll probably come to nothing, but I admit I can't think of anything else." He walked over to the window and stared out as though unseeing, and she joined him, standing at his side, her head barely high enough to see over the sill.

She said, "It's not an unattractive city, Dorn. It's like, well, a Tri-Di historical set."

He said, "It looks like prints I've seen of nineteenth century Madrid. See that area down there? It's almost a replica of the Plaza Mayor."

"It's beautiful," she said with unwonted softness.

"Yes, perhaps. The original Plaza Mayor is where the Inquisition held its famed *autos de fé*. I wonder what the equivalent is here?"

She looked up at him. "Does there have to be an equivalent?"

"I'm afraid yes. For centuries this culture hasn't moved an iota, either up or down. It's not a natural trait in civilized man. There's only one answer. When someone attempts to move it, he's clobbered. They've built up an efficient machine to do the clobbering. It was no mistake that the *Policía Secreta* detected our first three agents and eliminated them. Section G operatives are supposedly the most effective in United Planets but thus far it's been unable to make a dent in this throwback society."

She sighed. "But still it's a beautiful city, something like a museum."

Dorn Horsten grunted and his eyes went up to the sky. "Out

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

there," he said, "are the Dawn Planets. Frighteningly near. Sooner or later, man will be face to face with that alien race. As things stand now, we know only that they are mega-years in advance of us. The longer we can put off the confrontation, the better, but it is a matter of time."

"I know, I know. And we can't afford anachronisms such as Falange. It is later than we think."

He turned back to the room. "What did you have in mind, if and when we are able to locate the trial papers pertaining to our subversive colleague?"

Helen plopped herself into a chair and frowned prettily. "We didn't take it any further than that."

At the dinner table in the hotel restaurant that evening, Pierre Lorans stared down at the soup plate the waiter had put before him.

"What," he demanded, "is that?"

The waiter said anxiously, "It is *gazpacho*, Senor Lorans. The chef is awaiting your verdict."

"Then," Lorans said ominously, "he will wait until Mercury freezes over."

Martha said, "Now, Pierre."

Helen giggled.

Lorans ignored his family and held up his fingers to enumerate for the squirming waiter.

"*Gazpacho* is without doubt the most superlative cold soup ever devised. It is basically oil and vinegar, but it is not *gazpacho* until finely strained tomatoes, garlic, bread crumbs, chopped cucumber, green pepper and sometimes onions are added. I myself am not strongly opinionated on the matter of the onions; over the years I have vacillated. Immediately before serving the *gazpacho*, croutons are added."

The waiter squirmed, his eyes went around the dining room. Those at the nearer tables were listening. Lorans was making no attempt to keep his voice low.

"Yes, Senor Lorans," the waiter said. And he made the mistake of repeating, "The chef is anxious to have your opinion."

"My opinion is that he is an idiot," Lorans said flatly. "Where, in the name of the Holy Ultimate, are the cucumbers!"

"Cucumbers?"

The plump man glared at him.

The waiter closed his eyes in suffering and said, "I do not know what these cucumbers are."

Lorans took a deep breath, as though restraining himself. "I am sure you don't. Please, take this swill away. No eels on this forsaken planet, no dried cod, and now no cucumbers! Away with it. Away!"

The waiter took up the plate of chilled soup and began to return in the direction of the kitchen.

Lorans said imperiously, "And that for my wife and daughter as well. I refuse to allow them to eat swill."

"Now, Pierre," Martha said. "It isn't as bad as all that. I tasted it."

"Silence. I insist. No swill."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Helen giggled. "I don't like soup anyway," she tinkled. She evidently spotted Dr. Dorn Horsten for the first time. He was seated at a table on the other side of the room.

Helen waved at him. "Uncle Dorn! Uncle Dorn!"

It seemed to all but break his face, but he managed a stolid smile and a slight wave in return. He was evidently nearly through his meal.

The Lorans table maintained a chilly quiet while awaiting the next course. Even the exuberant Helen seemed frozen to silence by her father's irritation.

When the waiter returned he was accompanied by the head waiter, who hovered about while his underling served the new dish.

"And what is this?" Pierre Lorans demanded.

The headwaiter bowed. "The Posada's speciality, Senor Lorans. *Pastel de Pescado.*"

"Fish pie, eh? Then you do have fish on this forsaken world?"

"Yes, Senor Lorans. If I am not mistaken, the white fish utilized by the chef in *Pastel de Pescado* is remarkably similar to the sole of Earth."

Pierre Lorans touched the plate the waiter had put before him and seemed somewhat mollified when he found it so hot as to be almost untouchable.

He waited until the others had been served and then cautiously tasted. The headwaiter held his breath. Lorans tasted again.

Martha and Helen were eating rapidly, as though they had been through this before and knew what was coming.

Pierre Lorans, his face expressionless, put down his fork. He said to the headwaiter, "I am willing to give the chef the benefit of the doubt. Everybody has an off day. Undoubtedly it is an off day. Possibly he is seriously ill. On the verge of death. Martha! Helen!"

He came to his feet.

Martha and Helen, both with a sigh, put down their own utensils and stood also.

The headwaiter wrung his hands, his Iberian face in agony.

Lorans said, "We shall resort to our emergency supplies." He turned and stalked toward the door, followed by Martha, apology all over her face, with the rear brought up by Helen who had snagged a hard roll from the table before leaving.

All eyes followed the interplanetary celebrated chef. Half the guests looked down into their dishes, suspiciously, which was not missed by the headwaiter, who once again closed his eyes in agony.

Pierre Lorans hesitated at the table of Dr. Horsten. He stared down at the dessert the other was about to eat. "Is that supposed to be Spanish *flan?*" he said.

The doctor looked a bit startled. "Why, I believe so." He looked at the menu. "Yes, *flan.*"

"My dear Doctor, it will poison you. I am convinced. Do me the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

honor to adjourn to our rooms with us. I have been through this before. We never travel without our emergency supplies. Among other items I have a few tins of Camembert. Real Camembert from Normandy. I have also a bottle or two of stone-age Martell cognac. You can finish your, ah, meal with us. Camembert, rather than pseudo-*flan*. While we make do as best we can."

"Why . . . why—" the doctor hesitated.

Behind her husband, Martha was nodding emphatically for the other to accept the invitation. On the face of it, she didn't want to be alone with her enraged spouse.

"Very well, very gracious of you, I am sure," Dorn Horsten said, putting down his napkin and coming to his feet. "Very old Martell, eh? Imagine that. It's been years. Actually real cognac, not the synthetic?"

Pierre Lorans looked at him, his lips beginning to go pale.

The doctor cleared his throat. "Hm-m-m, yes, of course. It wouldn't . . . ah, couldn't be anything else but genuine cognac."

Lorans turned on his heel and marched out, followed now by Martha, then Dr. Horsten, with Helen bringing up the rear. She managed to snag another roll from the doctor's table as she passed. Obviously, Helen was an old hand at this emergency.

In the Lorans's suite, Pierre Lorans darted a look up at the bug he had smashed earlier. He looked at Helen, then Dorn Horsten, even as he was talking at full pitch about something involving eels, codfish and cucumbers.

Helen hissed, "Allez oop!"

The hulking doctor grabbed her about the waist and tossed her aloft. Her head all but touched the ceiling, a chubby hand went out and, briefly, grasping the chain that held the chandelier, she seemed to be poised in the air.

She said, "It hasn't been repaired," twisted her body and fell gracefully into the arms of the big man beneath.

Lorans, still mouthing his rage and dwelling now upon the allegedly inedible fish pie he had been served, darted a look at his watch.

"All right," he whispered. "Fifteen minutes." Then he went back to his loud monologue which most certainly could have been heard through the suite's door to the hall.

Dr. Dorn Horsten went over to the window, flung it open and vaulted out.

Martha winced. "I'll never get used to seeing him do that," she said.

Helen jumped up on the windowsill and peered down. "It's only four floors," she said. "Besides, there's a lawn down there. After all, he comes from a high-gravity planet. Bye, bye."

She launched herself after Horsten.

And Martha winced again.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Down below, the doctor caught his diminutive partner neatly and they started hurrying their way through the small park that edged the Posada San Francisco on this side. He didn't bother to put her down. Her small legs weren't up to the pace.

He said, "How in the world did they locate this place? Sheer luck?"

"Evidently couldn't have been easier," Helen said. "They took a tour of the city, and one of the first things the guide pointed out was the *Policía Secreta* headquarters. Pierre and Martha were suitably impressed

LICENSED TO UAZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the flunky blabbered out just about everything they wanted to know; they had no trouble guiding his conversation. They asked why it was necessary to have such a large police, and he told them all about the subversives who had recently been caught. Standing there in the street, he pointed out a window where interrogations were alleged to take place. Pointed out a window which was the only one, evidently, opening into the vaults where the police archives were kept. Oh, he was most helpful."

The doctor grunted. He was walking at a rapid pace now, the girl on his shoulder. A passer-by would probably have smiled at the pleasant picture they made. However, there were no other pedestrians at this hour. The Falangists supped late and went almost immediately to bed afterwards.

"I hope we find what we're looking for," he said. "But I doubt it. You brought that supposed toy of yours, didn't you? The rings that actually unfold into a set of knuckle-dusters?"

"You think I'm stupid, you big lummox?"

"No." Dorn Horsten sighed. "I don't think you're stupid. But I'm certainly glad you're the size you are."

"Why?" she said suspiciously.

"Because if you were my size, I might ask you to marry me, and the very thought changes my muscles to water."

"Why, you overgrown oaf!"

"That must be it, up ahead," he said. "No other building would be quite so large and quite so grim looking. Now, let me remember how Martha told me to locate that window."

They found the spot from which the Lorans had observed the building earlier.

Helen said, "You think there's a guard there?"

"Evidently. It's one of the few windows in the building with a light. This whole wing is dark expect for it." He sized up the situation. "I hope they didn't repair the window as yet."

Helen was on the ground now, chubby fists on her hips. "Not in this country. One of the things they brought from Terra most enthusiastically was the do-it-mañana philosophy. I've already noticed that. How in the world did Pierre manage to break it, anyway?"

Horsten was still casing the situation. He said absently, "You know him. He simply waited until nobody else was around, and then, while Martha distracted the guide's attention, he reached down, picked up a half brick or some other stone, and heaved it. Evidently, a few minutes

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

later a couple of *Guardia Civil* came dashing from the building, but didn't even bother to question the Lorans. The guide was mystified by them. When they pointed out the window, high above, the guide said reasonably that nobody could throw a brick that high, and anyway, they hadn't seen any young people, or criminal types loitering around."

He came to a decision. "I think I can make it up that wall, the gravity on this planet seems to be a mite less than even Earth and that brickwork will give hand- and toeholds. However, I can't go into that window and get down into the room beyond if there's an armed guard there. He'd zap me before I could get to him."

"Funker," Helen sneered. "Put all the strongarm stuff onto a little girl."

"All right, all right," he said. "Got any better ideas?"

"No," she said. And then, "Allez oop!"

He swung the miniature gymnast and acrobat around several times before releasing her. She sailed in an impossible flight to the iron bars that sheltered the small window. Tiny hands shot out and grasped them.

There was ample room to squeeze her childish body through. She paused a moment there, turned and made an age-old gesture to the man below, a circle with thumb and forefinger. He lumbered quickly to the wall and started scrambling up. He could see her tiny body swing through and cursed beneath his breath that she had gone on ahead before he arrived on the scene.

He reached the ten-story high window and, supporting himself with one hand, tore the iron bars off with the other. He knocked what was left of the glass out of the way and squeezed through. He dropped to the floor.

Helen stood there, absently shining the brass knucks on her chubby right hand with the palm of her left. She said, her voice at its most childish treble, "Where've you been so long, you slow-moving cloddy?"

He stared about the room. It was obviously devoted to special records. A sort of file-within-files arrangement. He looked down at the uniformed man who was stretched out on the floor.

"What did you do to him?" he said.

"Nothing much," Helen said modestly. "He was somewhat startled to see me dropping out of the heavens."

Horsten grunted. "What I wanted to know was, will he revive fairly soon?" He squatted next to the Falangist guard and slapped his face back and forth stingingly.

The other's eyes opened and at first expressed disbelief and then suddenly widened into terror. He reached clumsily for his side arm.

Horsten took it gently from his hand. It was a long barreled 9 mm

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

military pistol of a period so remote that on Earth it would have taken its place in a museum. Horsten bent the barrel and made a knot in it and handed it back.

He said to the guard gently, "Where are the records of the subversion trial of the Earthling?"

The other was bug-eyeing the gun.

Horsten said, "Please, Senor, you would not want me to have to . . ." He let the sentence dribble away.

The guard said, "No. No, no. I do not know what you want. But it is impossible."

"What's impossible?"

"I do not have the combination."

Horsten took the gun back again and bent the barrel into a sort of pretzel shape, to the other's horrified fascination.

"I didn't ask you that, did I?"

The guard pointed weakly at a large, iron safe. "Those are the top secret files pertaining to attempts to overthrow the government of El Caudillo."

Horsten came to his feet, and looked down at the other contemplatively. Helen had been scouting the room, now she took her place beside him.

"We should crisp him," the scientist muttered.

She took a deep breath and held her elbows tightly against her sides, in feminine rejection.

He looked at her in disgust. "All right, all right. I haven't got the guts either." He bent quickly and seemingly tapped the fallen man across the jawbone. Eyes rolled upward.

Horsten growled, "Look around for some wire, or rope . . . anything to tie him with."

"Telephone over here," she said.

He went over and ripped it out and returned to tie the guard.

Moments later, that worthy revived enough, once more, to see his assailants leaving. The man with the six hundred pound safe under one arm, the little girl seated on a shoulder.

She saw the eyes open and waved and lisped, "Goo' bye, Mr. Policeman."

He closed his eyes again and started in on several prayers he had not said since childhood.

IV

Colonel inspector Miguel Segura looked about the room unbelievingly. His eyes finally came back to the *Guardia Civil* private. He said, "The story again?"

"Senor Colonel, I do not know how many of them there were, nor even where they came from. I was here, wide awake. Suddenly, they were upon me. There must have been at least six."

One of the colonel's assistants said, "I would think so, if they managed to get that safe out of here and all the way down and out of the building."

The colonel growled, "Quiet, Raul. Go on with the story."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I fought as best I could. There were too many. They beat me unconscious and tied me. When I awoke, the safe was gone."

The colonel looked at the other unbelievingly and uncomprehendingly. He pointed to the broken window above. "The bars are broken from that window. Why? How? Surely they couldn't have done that without you hearing. But even if they could have, why? The safe was too large to have been let out there."

"Senor Colonel," the *Guardia Civil* told him. "I do not know. It is all as though the work of devils."

The colonel sighed deeply. "If it was not for the fact that the safe has been found, the door torn off, in the park, I could hardly credit a word of this."

Another aide came in. The colonel inspector looked at him. "Yes?"

"The clerks have been through the papers contained in the safe. There are only a very few missing."

"Well?"

"They pertained to the recent trial of the suspected Section G agent and his accomplices."

The colonel shook his head and stared at the guard. "Where did you say they came from? Supposedly the door was locked from inside, but you say they burst suddenly upon you."

The subject of interrogation squirmed. "Senor Colonel, I do not know. The door *was* locked. Uhhh, it was as though they descended from the heavens."

Colonel inspector Miguel Segura —chief inspector of the Nuevo Madrid *Policía Secreta* and rumored to be one of the handful of men who spent their evenings with El Caudillo in the Presidential Palace playing cards, sipping sherry and Fundador imported from Terra, and being entertained by flamenco dancers noted more for their pulchritude than their competence at the Iberian entertainment —had sent his card in formally.

He was in full uniform and accompanied only by his youthful aide, *Teniente* Raul Dobarganes, also in formal attire. Their manner was grave and, if anything, overly polite.

Dr. Horsten had been located and brought to the Lorans suite so that all could be addressed at once. They were seated, save Helen, who stood, toes pointed in, and staring up at *Teniente* Dobarganes, unblinkingly. It had to be admitted, the dress uniform of the *Policía Secreta* was not exactly drab.

The two police officers had hardly more than presented their stiff bows than Pierre Lorans shot to his feet dramatically. He crossed his arms over his chest. "I confess," he blurted. "I admit everything."

Inspector Segura stared at him. "You do?"

"Yes! Everything! I should never have come to this barbarian planet. Police everywhere. No freedom for the artist. I should have known better. It is impossible for me to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

equivocate. Impossible. I am a *Nouveau Cordon Bleu* chef. I am willing to die."

He shut his mouth and stood there defiantly.

Martha began to cry.

Helen didn't even bother to turn. She continued to stare up at the lieutenant, stationed no more than three feet from him.

The doctor looked blank.

The inspector raised eyebrows to his assistant, who shrugged a shrug that would have done every Spaniard since the Phoenicians first came to trade for tin, full proud.

The inspector turned his eyes back to the defiant chef. "Ah, what do you confess?" he said cautiously.

"To insulting this benighted, probably starving planet! Its food, its chefs, its lack of even such simplicities as bacalao, eels, cucumbers. Its . . ."

The inspector held up a hand to stem the tide.

"Please, Senor Lorans, will you be seated? This is a very serious matter."

The lips of Senor Lorans began to go pale.

Martha said hurriedly, "Now, Pierre. Please sit down. You are not being insulted. We must at least hear what Sergeant What's-his-name wants. And nobody is arresting you, Pierre."

The inspector shot a look from the side of his eyes, but the face of Raul Dobarganes was without expression.

When Lorans had been urged back into his chair, the colonel inspector took up again, though not without misgivings. He began, "Dear guests of Falange . . ."

Helen said, "I think you're pretty." But she was talking to *Teniente* Dobarganes, not the inspector, not even the mother of whom would have possibly considered the description.

Raul Dobarganes could feel the pink ascending from his tight collar.

"Gosh, you even blush pretty," Helen told him with satisfaction.

Martha said, "Helen, you be quiet now. The gentlemen have something to say." She smiled sweetly at the inspector. "You go right ahead, Sergeant."

Inspector Segura opened his mouth, closed it again. Paused for a long moment, then started all over.

He said to Pierre Lorans, "There is complete freedom on Falange, Senor. You have not observed correctly. This is the most stable socio-economic system ever devised. All are happy. All are in their place. Those whom the Holy Ultimate meant to administrate, do. Those whom fate meant to serve, serve. Everybody is satisfied with their lot on the planet Falange. Of how many of our sister members of United Planets can you say the same, eh?"

"Why, it sounds very nice," Martha nodded encouragingly.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Helen piped up. "Then how come you got so many cops everywheres?"

Both the colonel and his aide looked at her blankly for a long frustrated moment.

"Ah," Dr. Horsten murmured, "an interesting point. Out of the mouth of babes, so to speak." His stolid face took on an absentminded quality. "It seems to me I can think of a, uh, parallel some few centuries back on Earth. A period during which the leading nations paraded about in great style loudly boasting of their degrees of freedom and how highly they valued peace and despised aggression. However, somehow, those who disclaimed loudest of their love of democracy, peace and freedom had the largest police forces, secret police, intelligence agencies, armies and navies. Such nations as Switzerland and the Scandinavian, who didn't need to talk about their internal freedoms, invariably had small police forces and military, even judged on a per capita basis."

The inspector said, his voice verging on the snappish now, "Forgive me. Somehow we seem to have gotten off on a tangent. I must get to the point. Last night a major crime was committed. One of such nature that only an alien could possibly be interested. You are some of the few aliens registered in this vicinity and, by coincidence, you arrived only yesterday, from Terra, the planet involved."

"Terra? Mother Earth!" Pierre Lorans blurted, unbelievingly.

The inspector said dryly, "Rumors are beginning to go through the member planets of United Planets that Mother Earth seems to have developed into a strange parent. However, the point is that you are within a quarter mile of the scene of the crime, and you have just arrived from Terra."

Dr. Horsten said vaguely, "Crime. When did this, uh, crime take place, my dear Inspector?"

Segura said, "At almost exactly eleven o'clock."

The heavy-set scientist scowled and tried to remember. "I am afraid I have no . . . ah, what do they say in the crime tapes on Tri-Di? Ah, yes. No alibi."

The inspector looked at Raul Dobarganes who had at long last escaped the fascinated stare of little Helen. His assistant brought forth a report.

"At eleven o'clock last night, Doctor, you were right here in this room. Senor Lorans had been dissatisfied with his evening meal."

"Ha!" Lorans blurted and began to come to his feet. His wife restrained him.

"You are right," Dr. Horsten exclaimed. "I was right here with the Lorans family. A perfect alibi. I couldn't possibly have committed this terrible crime." A fascinated gleam came to his eyes behind their pince-nez glasses. "I love Tri-Di crime shows," he confided. "What

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

happened last night? Mass murder? An armed romp? Perhaps . . ."

"Romp?" the inspector said blankly.

"A caper. A job! Perhaps they knocked off the National Treasury, uh?" He came to his feet, portraying more excitement than anyone had ever expected this staid looking scientist to project. He held his hands as though cradling a two-handed weapon. "Muffle guns," he said. "Come driving up in fast hovercars. Leave a lookout outside. The rest go charging in, cutting down the guards . . ."

The inspector, stricken to silence, had closed his eyes in the Iberian expression of agony the Section G operatives were beginning to get used to.

It was Dobarganes who took over. He put a hand on the excited doctor's arm. "Please, Senor Horsten, it was not that at all. Please be seated." He got the good doctor into his chair and turned back to his superior. There was a strained element in his voice as well, by this time. "Senor Colonel?" he said.

The colonel had obviously decided to get it over with. He said, "The maids reported this morning that there was ash in your fireplace, as though papers had been burned there. It was, so far as we could analyze, paper of the type stolen last night. Undoubtedly, you have some explanation." He added, *sotto voce*, "Some weird explanation."

All except Helen looked blank. Helen was beginning to eye the colonel malevolently.

Martha said, "Why, why, I burned some papers last night. Heaven only knows why I ever brought them along when I packed."

"Senora, this paper was of the type stolen last night. Our laboratories . . ."

Dr. Horsten had recovered from his enthusiasm. He grunted deprecation. "My dear Inspector Sorghum . . ."

"Segura," Raul Dobarganes said quickly.

". . . I suspect your paper manufacturers produce many of the types originated by Earth. Undoubtedly, Mrs. Lorans, among her other effects, brought an identical, or at least similar, paper along with her."

The inspector was scowling.

The scientist went on, a certain impatience in his voice now. "Otherwise, you could always put the Senora under, ah, what is the term they use on the crime shows? Scop. Yes, Scop, truth serum, uh? Surely you will be able to, ah, dig out of her the method by which she sneaked from this fourth floor suite down through the hotel, captured these documents, or whatever, smuggled them back and then burnt them to hide the crime." He looked at Martha. "My dear Mrs. Lorans, you have not seen enough Tri-Di spy tapes. You must chew up and swallow such secret papers."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Martha's face revealed that she didn't understand what either of them were talking about.

The inspector gave up. He was wondering why he had bothered to come here when any of a hundred underlings could have checked the remote lead. He began making his preliminaries toward leaving. However, he reckoned without Helen.

She had evidently come to her decision and advanced on the quick to deal him a sharp kick on the shin. Startled, he bent to grab the leg assaulted.

She demanded in her childish treble, "What did you do to my Uncle Ferd? Did you go around arresting him, too? Don't you dare hurt my Uncle Ferd."

The inspector looked appealingly at his aide who came forward hurriedly to the rescue, however, Helen had already been snatched away by her mother.

"Don't you dare arrest my Uncle Ferd!" Helen shrilled.

For a moment, the inspector thought he might have something. He snarled, "Who's Uncle Ferd?"

His lieutenant cleared his throat. "Probably the technician for the *corridas*, Senor Colonel. He arrived on the same spaceship, you'll recall. Senor Zogbaum."

"Oh, yes." The colonel inspector straightened and did his gentlemanly best to smile at the child. "Your Uncle Ferd is very safe, little Senorita. He was in custody . . . ah, that is, he was guarded by friends all night, so he couldn't possibly be involved, uh, that is, couldn't be one of the gang of bad men. And now, Senora, Senores, little Senorita, forgive the *Teniente* and I for interrupting you. *Hasta luego.*"

He and his aide got out more speedily than protocol usually called for on Falange.

Back in the suite, Martha gestured upward at the bug.

Pierre Lorans took a pocketknife from his clothes and opened what would ordinarily have been the small blade, the end of which had been filed off to make a small screwdriver. He handed it to Helen.

Helen said, "Allez oop," and in a moment duplicated her performance of the day before, poising for a long moment, partially supported by a tiny hand grasping the chandelier chain. The other hand darted out with the improvised screwdriver, loosened a screw slightly, then she fell over gracefully and back down into the arms of her partner.

Horsten tossed her high again, she gave the screw another turn. On the third attempt, she pulled loose a wire before dropping away.

She muttered with satisfaction, "I'll bet whoever's in charge of bugging is going slowly drivel-happy."

Back in chairs, they looked around at each other.

Horsten looked at Martha. "You memorized the whole trial before burning it?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Of course I did," Martha said.

"Why didn't you flush away *all* the ashes?"

"Because to hide all signs of my burning some paper would have been practically impossible. By leaving a little ash, the fact of a considerable burning was hidden. My story held up."

"I suppose so," he said. "Some time today, Martha, it might be a good idea, while Pierre is busy with his colleague chefs, for you to go to a public library and memorize the Falange legal code. We might need it."

Helen said thoughtfully, "And while you're at it, all rules pertaining to the bullfights during this fantastic selection of their Caudillo."

"I think you're right," Martha said. "I'll do it."

Horsten looked at the plumpish Lorans. "At the rate you're going, they'll shoot you, or kick you off the planet, even before they find you're a Section G agent."

Lorans grinned one of his rare grins, which gave him an impish quality. "No. I'm impressing them more by the minute. They wouldn't dream of expelling such an obviously temperamental artist, until I have at least produced one complete repast. They recognize my type too well, not to understand it. At this point, they're in awe. The present El Caudillo evidently considers himself a gourmet. Heads would roll if anything happened to me before he could get his undoubtedly rounded belly under a table provided by my art."

Helen said, "The problem now is how do we get these two underground fellas out of the deep freeze?"

Martha looked at her. "Deep freeze?"

"That Alcazar political prison."

The doctor said unhappily, "And what do we do with them once we get them out? We don't know where their friends may be, if they have friends. Very possibly they have no place to go to ground."

Helen said, "Why not here?"

And at their reception of that, snarled, "I'm not as simple as all that. Today, Pierre goes out to buy some clothes suitable to Falange fashion. He buys several suits, including three that are semi-formal and very similar to the sort that the Posada waiters wear. Ready-made —he hasn't time for tailoring. One suit will be slightly too large, one just right, one for a slimmer man. Most of these Falangists seem of average size. O.K., we liberate the two former companions of our Section G agent who was shot as a subversive, bring them here and dress them in Pierre's suits. We should be able to get some sort of fit.

"We keep them around the suite. If the police come in, they walk out, with trays, or towels, or whatever. Who ever looks at a hotel waiter?"

Lorans said skeptically, "Suppose a real waiter comes in?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"There are four rooms, including the bath. We'll shuffle them around from room to room, in closets, under beds. Maybe we'll put over the idea that Martha doesn't like maids to make her bed, or even clean her room. She wants to do it herself. Hotels have more eccentric guests than that. We can keep our refugees hidden in her room when the maids come in."

Lorans wiped a hand over his brow. "Talk about the Purloined Letter!"

Horsten said, "It's a rather desperate expedient."

Helen snapped, "All right, double-dome, think up something better."

Lorans said, "How are we going to get out of here to raid the prison? And, if we do, how will we locate them? What were their names, Martha?"

Martha said, "Bartolomé Guerro and José Hoyos." She looked thoughtful. "I could probably find some sort of prison plan in the National Library."

"Hm-m-m," the doctor said. "I wonder if at the same time you could find a plan of the power plant serving Nuevo Madrid."

Helen looked at him speculatively. "I don't trust you," she said.

He beamed at her.

Colonel Segura, making his way with the use of an old-fashioned flashlight, covered the small room thoroughly. He was beginning to doubt, these days, the reports of his own senses. The place was a shambles.

Finally, Raul Dobarganes bringing up the rear, the colonel returned to where two of his plainclothesmen had the hotel electrician pinned to a chair.

The colonel inspector glowered down at that unfortunate. "You are under arrest," he snapped, "and will probably be shot for sabotage of government property. The Posada is government operated by the *Policía Secreta* to keep an eye on aliens and other suspects, as you well know."

The electrician groaned his misery and one of the plainclothesmen backhanded him across the mouth.

The colonel went on ominously. "You have one chance. Tell us the purpose of your crime and reveal all accomplices."

The technician shook his head in mute denial and hopeless appeal for mercy.

The colonel, directing the beam of the electric torch full into the other's face, said, "Every light in the building has been extinguished and every device dependent on electricity is disrupted. Why? What did you expect to accomplish?"

The other moaned his misery and the plainclothesmen slapped him again.

The colonel sighed deeply. "Tell me your lie again . . . traitor."

"I am not a traitor. I am no traitor . . ."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He received another stinging slap across the mouth.

"Senor Colonel, I swear by the United Temple, by the Holy Ultimate, it is exactly as I have told you. A strange, whirling something came in through the door. Even as it whirled, it moved slowly and in . . . in a half circle around the room. I was spellbound, hypnotized. In all my life, Senor Colonel, I have never seen such a strange thing. I was paralyzed. It came in through the door, went down the room, whirling, whirling, and then came back and . . ."

"And hit you on the back of the head, you fool."

"Yes, Colonel," the other said in misery.

"And when you finally awoke what . . ."

"When I awoke, the control room was a mess. Everything capable of being smashed was smashed. It could have been but moments, but when I awoke there was damage of an extent I would have thought would have taken hours."

The colonel boiled inwardly in his frustration, directed the beam of his flashlight upward. "There. That device, up near the ceiling, whatever it is. You can hardly see it from here. A group of saboteurs desiring to smash that would have had to have a ladder. Are you suggesting they marched through the halls of this hotel carrying a ladder?"

"No, Senor Colonel," the electrician moaned. "I don't know . . ."

Another vicious slap.

The colonel snarled, "These whirling mysteries of yours are an attempt to hide the true facts. Something is going on here. You have accomplices. Several of them must have come here and joined with you to wreck your charge."

"No . . . no . . ."

Another *Policía Secreta* underling came hurrying into the room. Raul Dobarganes met him and spoke briefly in a low whisper. The *teniente* approached his superior. The colonel looked up at him, impatiently.

Dobarganes said unhappily, "Senor Colonel, the electricity is now off all over the city. It is in darkness. Only the palace of El Caudillo, with its private power plant, has lights."

The colonel stared at him, as though his lieutenant was an idiot. "A temporary power break."

"No, Senor Colonel. From what this man says, there has been unprecedented sabotage of the power plant."

"Are you insane! There are a hundred guards!"

"Yes, Senor Colonel."

"Come along! *Madre de Dios!* the world goes mad!" The colonel stormed for the door.

Behind him, the electrician sighed in relief and, as though in reflex, the plainclothesman smashed him across the mouth again.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

V

As they made their uncomfortable way across the open field, Lorans growled, "I suppose we should count our blessings. El Caudillo's government concentrates practically everything here in Nuevo Madrid. Suppose this confounded political prison was all the way on the other side of the planet?"

Helen said, "I still don't know how we're going to locate them." She was perched up on Dorn Horsten's shoulder, as always when time had to be made.

Horsten said, "If we have this right, they keep their prime state prisoners in the left wing. Martha memorized it at the library."

Helen said, "Great, but there might be a thousand of them."

The doctor half stumbled over an unseen obstacle, caught himself and said, "No. Contrary to belief, police states don't necessarily have their prisons chock full. The worst political prisoners they shoot, the least dangerous they send off to slave labor projects. Why feed them in prison? Put them to work. Those in between are kept in jail until they decide if they belong to the first category, or the second."

They had come to a wall. Pierre Lorans took a rope he had been carrying and handed it to Helen. She wrapped it about her tiny waist and turned to Horsten and said, "Allez oop!"

He caught her, whirled her, released her. She shot upward.

Lorans growled, "I wish I hadn't lost my boomerang, back there at the power station. What'll they think when they find it?"

"They won't," Horsten grunted, peering upward after his diminutive partner. "Until you showed me that confounded thing, I'd never even heard of a boomerang, and I still don't quite believe the things you can do with it. There's no reason to believe they've ever heard of them, either."

Lorans complained. "It was my favorite little tool. And one of the few we could take a chance on and bring along—in Helen's box of toys, of course. What's taking that girl so long?"

At that very moment, the end of the rope slithered down.

Without further word, Dr. Horsten gave it a sharp tug or two, to make sure Helen had it well anchored, shoved his glasses firmly back on his nose, and then started up, hand over hand, his feet braced against the prison wall.

A few minutes later, the end of the rope jerked up and down, in signal. Lorans took it and tied a loop in the end and put one foot inside. He gave a sharp double tug and was drawn upward to where the others awaited him on the wall top.

It was pitch dark.

Horsten whispered. "All right, let's go. We've seen a few prison

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

guards going about below with improvised lights. Evidently, the place is in a tizzy."

Helen whispered, "Down this way, according to that chart Martha drew for us. The left wing is down this way."

They came to a barred door.

Horsten came to the front and inspected it. "The best thing," he murmured, even as his big hands went out, "is simply to break the"—he grasped two of the heavy bars near the lock and suddenly pulled them toward him—"lock." With a rip of tortured metal, the door came open toward him.

"How about alarms?"

"Don't be silly," Helen told him. "What do you think we fouled up that power plant for? Now let me go ahead and scout this out."

The two men pressed back against a wall while she reconnoitered. She took longer to return than they found reasonable, so when she did show, both felt relief. She was breathing deeply.

"What happened?" Lorans demanded.

"I ran into two guards and had to clobber them."

The doctor looked down at her tiny figure and shook his head. "I'll never get used to it," he muttered under his breath.

Helen said, "I found out where they are."

"Where who are?"

"Don't be dense. Our boys. Hoyos and Guerro."

The two men stared at her. "How'd you find that out?" Lorans said.

"Oh, one of the two guards," Helen said lightly. "Down this way."

"Just a minute. What did you do to the guard? I want to know what's behind me."

She tried to brush it off. "I just kind of twisted his arm a little."

For a brief moment, Dr. Horsten had before his eyes the picture of this seemingly sweet little girl putting strongarm methods to work on a tough, burly prison guard until the other divulged information.

He said, "You mean you let him see you, clearly?"

Helen shrugged it off. "So what? You think he's going to report to his chief that an eight-year-old girl put the slug on him?"

They followed her. From time to time, through windows overlooking the prison yard below they could see guards, or other prison employees, going this way and that with lanterns, flashlights or torches. Civilized institutions fall apart drastically without power.

Helen whispered, "This way, I think."

Back at the hotel, they returned to the Lorans suite by much the same manner as they had scaled the prison wall. But this time there were an extra two members in the party.

After Horsten had made it up

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the wall, he hauled the others after him, one, two, three. Helen, of course, had gone first, propelled by her hefty partner.

Martha was there, ready with a drink all around.

Pierre Lorans said to her, "Anything while we were gone?"

"No. Not so much as a knock on the door."

Lorans turned to the two newcomers. "If you'll come this way, we'll get some new clothes on you. Later, either the doctor or I will take those you're wearing and dispose of them." He led the continually surprised Falangist underground men to his bedroom.

Meanwhile, Dorn Horsten opened the door to the hall and bellowed out into the darkness. "Hollo! Confound it, how long is this fantastic situation going to last! We want lights, food, something to drink! Hollo!"

Eventually, a hotel servant bearing a heavy candle came scurrying and the scientist made a big to-do about sitting around in the dark for the past couple of hours, and that they demanded some service.

The servant scurried off again. He gave the impression of having been doing a lot of scurrying all evening.

The doctor gave a grunt of satisfaction and turned back to Martha and Helen. "It'll never occur to anybody that we haven't been here all evening," he said.

"We hope," Helen muttered.

Lorans returned with the two liberated prisoners and the next fifteen minutes were expended explaining to the revolutionaries the purpose of the Lorans-Horsten team and the scheme to keep the two safely hidden by their remaining out in the open, disguised as waiters.

The older of the two, Bartolomé Guerro, was quite tall, all but gaunt, dark of complexion, inclined to flare in his speech. He was obviously a leader of men. The other, to the suprise of the Section G operatives, was a youngster, certainly not beyond his early twenties. Of medium height, he moved with a litheness seldom found in men and he seemed incapable of making an awkward movement.

It came out in moments. José Hoyos, full matador at the age of eighteen, had been the last, despairing hope of the Lorca Party, an illegal underground organization dedicated to the overthrow of the entire El Caudillo system. Even before the coming of the Section G operative who had worked with them, they had sought out this potential champion from the ranks of the organization. José was a third-generation son of a family devoted to the building of a new world-government to supersede the present system on Falange. His reflexes were fast, his appearance strikingly handsome, his grace, superlative. Helen could hardly keep her eyes off him.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They had groomed him for the next series of national games, when the old Caudillo had died and a new one was to be selected. The idea was to have him acclaimed El Caudillo and then to make sweeping changes from within. They had gathered funds to see him through the best of the planet's bullfighting schools. They had gone to the expense of advancing his career through the *novillero* years, when as an amateur it was so difficult for the usual torero to find fights, it often being necessary that the young hopeful buy his own bull.

They had backed his career for years, waiting, waiting. And step by step José Hoyos had reached prominence, until in the opinion of most aficionados, he was *Numero Tres*, third man from the top in the lists of matadors. The two above him were gentlemen toreros, both at least ten years his senior and both the epitome of the hero of the fiesta brava, national spectacle of the planet Falange.

They had arrived at a position of having only to wait for the demise of the present Caudillo, for José to have his chance. Needless to say, El Caudillo was in no hurry.

The lean Bartolomé Guerro looked around at the Section G operatives. "It was then your colleague, Phil Birdman, came to Falange and stressed the importance of dispatch. He couldn't wait for the Caudillo's natural death."

Martha said, "You mean he favored assassination?" There was discomfort in her voice.

The Falangist looked at her. "Not necessarily. It would be impossible to assassinate El Caudillo. His security is simply too embracing. Birdman was trying to find some other method of speeding things."

Horsten shook his head. They were talking now by the light of a small fire Lorans had built in the fireplace.

"Any public figure can be assassinated, given a determined enough group, with adequate resources."

The youthful Hoyos, usually silent, spoke up. "Not El Caudillo," he said. "His police are thick as soup."

The doctor grunted. "Of course, I don't advocate political assassinations," he said, "but listen to this one. Some centuries ago on Earth a desperate radical political group decided it was necessary to kill a titled foreigner who was to have a parade in their city. Troops and police, they knew, would be present in literally tens of thousands. So twenty-five of their number gathered in a room and drew straws and the five who had the shortest were given bombs or pistols and were told where to spot themselves along the path of the parade. Then they left. Those twenty remaining drew straws. The five with the shortest were given pistols and in-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

structed to place themselves behind the appointed assassins, in the crowd. If, when it came the turn of one of the assassins to make his try at the victim, he failed to try, then the man stationed behind him was to shoot him. Those five then left and the remaining men drew straws and the five with the shortest were given pistols and instructed to stand behind the second man. If the first man failed to make his try, and the second man failed to shoot the first man, then it was the task of the third to shoot the second. These five left and straws were chosen again. The five short ones were issued pistols and instructed to stand behind the third man in the crowd, if the first man failed to make his try and the second man failed to shoot him and the third man failed to shoot the second, then the fourth man's task was to shoot the third. The five remaining men need, of course, draw no straws. They issued themselves guns and left to assume their posts—behind the fourth man."

The doctor let his eyes go around the group. "Next day, the parade started on schedule. The automobile containing the titled victim and his wife reached the first assassin who attempted to throw his bomb but was caught. The police then reached the second assassin who tried to shoot them with his pistol, but was pulled down by the surrounding mob. They reached the third assassin—and got no further."

Horsten held his peace for a moment, and then said, "The assassins claimed their victim, but they didn't know what the cost was to be. His name was Archduke Ferdinand and his death precipitated the first of the World Wars."

Bartolomé Guerro thought about it. Finally he said, "Why do you tell us of this?"

The scientist shrugged. "Merely pointing out that dedicated men can do what must be done. Your problem here, of course, is different."

"Yes, of course." The Falange revolutionist stirred in his chair. "José and I must get out and reestablish our contacts, get in touch with the cells of our Nuevo Madrid organization. Our arrest caused considerable disruption of long-laid plans."

Horsten said, "One thing. Our central offices have decided that the government of El Caudillo stands in the way of progress, but there is no point in tearing down one socio-economic system if a superior one is not available to take its place. What is your own philosophy of government, Senor Guerro?"

The gaunt man took his time. Finally, he said, "Government should be by the elite, nothing else makes sense. Who wishes to be led by someone competent only to bring up the rear? But each generation must find its own elite. They are not automatically the children of the last generation's, nor are

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they necessarily to be found among those with titles, great traditions behind them, nor accumulated wealth."

Both Horsten and Lorans were nodding basic agreement. The doctor said, "And your method of selecting your governing elite?"

The Falangist looked full into his eyes and said very slowly, "This is an internal problem of our world. We will solve it based on local conditions, needs, traditions—all the factors that make Falange unique." His voice went slower still. "We do not need the assistance of even friends from worlds beyond, where our institutions are not fully understood. We thank you for your assistance in destroying the corrupt government of El Caudillo, but we must insist on being the engineers of our future."

"Damn well put," Helen said.

"And now we must go," Guerro said.

Martha said worriedly, "You'll be safe? We planned to keep you here for the time."

Guerro and Hoyos came to their feet. "We'll be as safe as can be expected," Guerro said. "Your group will be here?"

"Yes," Horsten said. "Our cover is excellent. When your people have come to some plan of action, let us know. Meanwhile, we shall put our own minds to the situation."

José Hoyos was looking down at Helen speculatively. There was an element of apology in his voice when he said, "How old are you truly?"

Helen said snappishly, "That is a question no man should ever ask a woman."

He looked down at her again, taking in the little girl's dress, sprinkled with wild flowers, at the blond hair caught up in its ribbon. He shook his head.

"You want to Indian wrestle?" she snarled.

"I beg your pardon?" The good-looking torero was confused.

"Leave him alone, Helen," Martha said.

"I'll clobber him," Helen muttered under her breath. "How long am I supposed to go between dates in this damned Section G! I'm a normal young woman."

They saw the two Falangist citizens to the door, the doctor checking the hall up and down, before letting them go.

"Holy Jumping Zen," Helen said, "but he's beautiful. You should have seen his eyes pop when I wiggled through the bars of his cell."

Colonel inspector Segura did what little there was in his power to make his voice soothing. He was seated in the gray drabness of his office, his heavy Castilian style desk a litter of papers and reports, a heavy military revolver used as a paperweight to hold down a pile to his right.

He said now, "No loyal *ciudadano* need fear the officials of El

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Caudillo's government. They need only tell the truth and receive the acclaim of El Caudillo's faithful servants."

The man before him squirmed. In his time, the other had run afoul of El Caudillo's so-called faithful servants before. Never seriously, though any contact at all with the *Policía Secreta* was serious enough. But he had never dreamed—save possibly in nightmare—that he would ever confront Miguel Segura himself. One heard stories of Miguel Segura."

"Now," the colonel inspector said in heavy gentleness, "just what was it you saw?"

"Senor Colonel, I was taking a walk through the park . . ."

"So I understand. At perhaps two o'clock in the morning."

The other squirmed again. "Senor Colonel, I can explain. My wife and I . . ."

Segura held up an impatient hand. "I am not at present interested in why a supposedly honest *ciudadano* might find fit to prowl the streets in the dead of night. Get to your story."

"Senor Colonel, it is unbelievable."

The colonel was beginning to lose patience. "There have been many unbelievable things happening in this city, recently. Quick now!"

"Senor Colonel, your excellency. I was not drunk."

"Your story!" the colonel roared.

The other faltered, took a deep breath. "Senor Colonel, I saw a man walk up the side of the Posada San Francisco."

"You saw *what!*"

"Senor Colonel, I was not drunk. I insist. When I told my wife, she told a neighbor. Soon it had spread throughout the block and the *Guardia Civil* came to question me, as they always come if there is the slightest deviation from everyday routine."

"All right. What do you mean, you saw a man walk up the side of the Posada? You mean he was climbing up the side of the hotel, do you not?"

"Senor Colonel, it was at a distance, one admits. It was none too clear. But it was a man, and he was not climbing. Not in the ordinary sense. He was *walking* up the wall. He got to the fourth, or perhaps the fifth floor and then disappeared."

"Disappeared? You mean he went into a window?"

"Perhaps. For me, he simply disappeared."

The colonel stared at the other for a long unprofitable minute. He said finally, "Could it have been that he had a rope suspended from the window and was climbing it, walking up the wall holding onto such a rope?"

"Perhaps, Colonel. It was at a distance, as one has said."

"Get out," the colonel said. "Leave your complete story with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the secretary outside. And now get out."

After his informant had left, the colonel inspector sat for a long time, staring unseeingly into a far corner of the office. A light flashed on his desk. He pressed a button.

Teniente Raul Dobarganes entered, a curved piece of wood in hand. The thing might have been a yard in length in all, it might have been a club, but, if so, an unlikely looking one.

Segura growled a sour welcome, then, "Well?"

"It is a boomerang."

The colonel looked at him.

Raul Dobarganes cleared his throat. "A weapon of the Australian Aborigines."

"What in the name of the Holy Ultimate is an Australian whatever-you-said?"

"A very primitive people of Earth. Evidently, according to my historical informant, the device also showed up on other parts of Terra. They were found in Egyptian tombs. One form of the boomerang was more a toy than anything else. You threw it and it made a large circle out into the air and then returned to you."

The colonel looked at the instrument again as though unbelieving but kept his peace.

His lieutenant went on. "The hunting and war boomerangs were different. They were meant to strike the game, or enemy, at a distance and with great accuracy and force."

"You mean you simply threw the thing? Why should it be any more accurate than any other . . . well . . . club?"

"It twirls in the air." The young aide demonstrated. "Going around and around like this. The way it's twisted, the wood . . . it evidently acts as some sort of airfoil."

"Let me see that damned thing," the colonel snapped.

He stared down at it.

Finally he snapped, "Get me the customs report on the possessions brought in by Pierre Lorans and his family and by Dr. Horsten. Check back to make double sure that the inspection was as thorough as usual. I want to know if as much as a single toothpick could have gotten past undetected."

"Yes, Colonel Segura."

When the reports came, the colonel pored over them with a feeling of frustration. He didn't know what he was looking for. Nevertheless, eventually he found it.

He stabbed with his finger, accusingly. "A box of toys."

Raul Dobarganes looked blank.

"*What* toys?" the colonel rasped.

"Why . . . why, a girl's toys, I suppose," his aide said. "Toys for that little girl, dolls and so forth."

"Ha!" the colonel said. "Put a man in the Lorans's suite at the first opportunity. When they are at dinner, or something. I want to know what's in the box of supposed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

toys. Also check thoroughly on that confounded microphone that is continually breaking. And another thing, Raul. That electrician from the Posada. Have him in here. And that guard of the archives who had the fanciful story of a half dozen or more men descending upon him from the skies. Bring him here. And those hysterical guards from the Alcazar Prison. I want them, too. On the double, Raul!"

His assistant was interrupted for one last order. "And Raul. You might get in touch with that Temple monk assigned to the task of exorcising the poltergeists at the city power plant. You can tell him it won't be necessary."

"Yes, Colonel Segura," Raul Dobarganes said, bewildered.

Colonel Inspector Miguel Segura bent a baleful eye on the night guard of the archives of the *Policía Secreta.* He said, infinite cold in his voice, "This time I want the real story of what happened that night the safe was robbed."

"Senor Colonel . . ." There were blisters of cold sweat on the man's forehead. If anything, he seemed more distraught than he had been the night of the crime. Evidently, he'd had time to think it over in detail and the thinking hadn't reassured him. Which was interesting, the colonel decided.

The colonel said, "Your life is at stake. I want the truth."

"Senor Colonel, I told the truth. Most of it is a mystery to me. They descended upon me from I know not where. Seemingly from the air. I was helpless, immediately."

"How many of them did you say there were?"

The guard's eyes darted, but there was no escape. "I . . . I don't know, Senor Colonel."

The colonel leaned forward. "Were there only two . . . or three?"

The blisters of sweat were such now that the man had to wipe them away desperately.

The colonel's eyes shot suddenly to his lieutenant. "Put him to the question!" he rasped.

"No . . . no . . . !" the guard squealed.

"Torture him. I want every tiny detail of what really happened in that archives room."

"Yes, Colonel," Raul Dobarganes said unhappily. He didn't like this phase of his work. He put his head out the office door and summoned four plainclothesmen.

"No . . . no . . ." the victim was still squealing as they hauled him off.

The colonel's mouth worked. "Now those prison wardens who allowed the subversives to escape. Bring them in. I want a rehash on that story, too."

Martha Lorans looked out the window and said, "Oh, oh."

"What's the matter?" Helen said.

"Come here, quick. That line of men, crossing the park."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Helen took one look, said, "Get Pierre," and darted for the hall and the suite of Dorn Horsten.

She made it only halfway. Suddenly, from around a corner of the hotel corridor, two brawny *Policía Secreta*, both carrying pistols, grabbed her up.

Kicking and squealing, she was carried unceremoniously off.

Back in the Lorans apartment, Pierre entered from an inner room. "What's the matter?"

Martha said hurriedly, "Pierre, armed men are closing in from all sides. It must be for us. Is there any last thing we can do? Are there any papers to burn or . . ."

"No, of course not. All our papers are in your head. Where's Helen, Dorn . . ."

"She's gone to get him. You think we can get out of here?"

"No. But we can try. Come on, Martha!"

He headed for the door, she immediately behind him.

It opened and they were confronted by Colonel Inspector Miguel Segura. Behind him were at least a dozen armed men.

"Ah," the colonel said politely, "the *Cordon Bleu* chef who doesn't appreciate the cuisine of Falange, eh? We shall see what you think of the food we serve the inmates of Alcazar Prison, especially those sentenced to be shot for illegal activities against the government of El Caudillo."

There were sounds of a battle royal going on down the hall; great shouts, breaking of furniture, cries of agony.

The colonel turned coldly to one of his minions. "Take four more men with stun guns. A freak who can carry a six hundred pound safe down ten flights of stairs and then tear the door off, evidently with his bare hands, can take a lot of subduing. Be sure not to kill him."

He turned back to the Lorans. "You will accompany me to the *Policía Secreta* headquarters for interrogation."

Pierre Lorans said, "This is an outrage. I wish to inform the United Planets Embassy of my arrest, so that I can arrange for an attorney for my defense."

Some police underling in the background chuckled at that.

The colonel said formally, "Pierre Lorans, you are unfamiliar with Falange legal procedure. The court will appoint an attorney to handle your defense."

"A Falange attorney?" Lorans snorted, drawing himself up in his Gallic stance. "I want a United Planets lawyer!"

Martha said lowly, "That's their law, Pierre. The court appoints defense attorneys in cases involving subversion and espionage."

They were marched into the hall where they were met by another delegation of *Policía Secreta*, these carrying a trussed up Helen. Still further along the hall came two more *Guardia Civil*, looking the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

worse for wear. They carried a stretcher and upon it, unconscious and breathing deeply, Dr. Dorn Horsten.

A service elevator took them down to street level, and they emerged into an alley behind the hotel. Police limousines awaited them there and they were whisked to the large gray, dominating *Policía Secreta* building which Helen and Horsten had penetrated so short a time ago, looking for the court records of the trial of the Section G agent.

They were hurried through passages, into a large gloomy interrogation room.

The others were pushed into chairs. The colonel eyed the now stirring Dr. Horsten. He said to his bully-boys, "Two of you station yourselves across the room with your guns trained on him. If he shows any belligerence at all, stun him again."

The doctor, groaning from the aftermath of the blast he had received earlier, revived rather quickly, once the process had started. His bones felt as though he had suffered rheumatism and arthritis for a decade and more. He rubbed them painfully, even as he looked up.

He managed to get out, in indignation: "What is the meaning of this? You have a warrant for this outrage?"

"A technicality we dispense with on Falange, and as temporary residents, you come under our legal code. All our laws apply to you," the colonel told him smoothly. "And now, just so as not to waste time, let me inform you that your trial will take place within the hour, and you will be shot this afternoon, at latest. Between then and now, you will be placed on Scop, truth serum, to reveal any accomplices you may have had in your vicious schemes."

"Some trial that's going to be, if you already know we're going to be shot," Helen said bitterly. She made no effort to maintain her childish treble.

The colonel looked at her and made a mocking bow. "I have not forgotten the kick you gave me, Senorita Lorans." He afforded a light laugh. "Our investigations tell us that there is a whole planet of people such as yourself, though evidently you are one of the top gymnasts. A champion acrobat on a world that loves gymnastics. It explains a great deal of what would have seemed unexplainable." He turned to the doctor. "And you, Dorn Horsten. We have a bit of information on your own home planet, ah, Ftörsta. It must be a strange world, indeed."

The doctor said, "I'd like to get just two fingers around your neck."

"I am sure you would. But time presses. The court is being set up for your brief trial. Immediately, we will resort to our Scop . . ."

Teniente Raul Dobarganes burst

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

open the door and came in, his face ghost-pale.

"What in the name of the Holy Ultimate is wrong?" his superior growled.

Raul Dobarganes shook his head, as though to achieve clarity. "El Caudillo," he whispered. "El Caudillo has been shot."

VI

"Shot!" the colonel rasped.

"Dead. Shot dead. The parade in Almeria. The parade in honor of the glorious matadors who have fallen in the arena. The assassins were stationed all along the route of the parade. There must have been at least five of them in all. The fourth gunman got him. El Caudillo is dead."

Horsten winced. He muttered, "I didn't expect them to be so susceptible, when I told them that story."

Helen looked at him, speculatively. "Are you sure?"

"I don't know," he said defensively. "I suppose it doesn't make much difference now."

The colonel had sped from the room, roaring orders right and left.

Pierre Lorans found the courage to laugh. "Well, at least it will probably give us a respite for an hour or so."

Martha said, "More than that." Her eyes seemed to go empty and she recited, *"Falange Legal Code, Article Three, Section Three. During the National Fiesta Brava and until the new Caudillo is confirmed, there are no criminals on the planet Falange. Each resident must be free to compete as a torero if such is his desire."*

Horsten looked his astonishment. "You mean to say they open the prisons?"

"Evidently. It must be a madhouse."

Helen growled, "Let's get out of here and back to the hotel. Evidently, there's nothing to stop us." She looked over at Raul Dobarganes. "Is there, cutey?"

He had been taking in their conversation, blankly. In actuality, the last National Fiesta Brava had been held while he was still so young that few of the details remained with him. All he could recall was the great excitement. Now, he was almost as confused as the Section G operatives by the sudden change in the situation.

However, he knew the law. He shook his head. "No. There is nothing to stop you. There are no criminals on Falange. But as soon as the new Caudillo has been selected, you will again be apprehended and your trial will take place."

Helen winked at him. "Let's go, folks."

They stood on the balcony of the Lorans's suite at the Posada San Francisco and looked glumly down at the merrymaking crowds.

"Look at those costumes," Martha said. "You would have thought

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that it would take weeks to make some of them."

Horsten grunted. "They were out on the streets within half an hour of the flashing of the news of El Caudillo's death."

Bartolomé Guerro was with them, his expression sour. "For some of them, it is the one real excitement of their lives. The world turns upside down. The peon is free to leave the *finca* and journey into town for the local corridas. If he has the wherewithal, he can even make the trip here to Nuevo Madrid for the finals. The poorest laborer, in costume in the fiestas, rubs shoulders with the wealthiest hidalgo; may steal a kiss, if he's handsome enough, from a titled lady."

Helen said, staring down at the mobs of dancing, running, laughing, drinking, milling Falangists, "This going on all over the planet?"

Guerro nodded. "Everywhere. There are few towns so small as not to have a bullring. It is the Falange equivalent of the Roman circus, and serves the same purpose. So long as the people are completely caught up in the fiesta brava, they have little time to realize the inadequacies of the life they lead. And this is the fiesta of all fiestas. The National Fiesta Brava, seldom witnessed more than once or twice in a single man's lifetime."

Horsten said, "And the elimination fights are taking place throughout the planet?"

"That is correct. Local toreros fight in their local arenas. The best is then sent to the county seat, where he competes with those others who have survived the local corridas. From hence, he goes to the nearest large city, and eventually here to Nuevo Madrid for the finals. Thousands of corridas are being held all over Falange at this very moment."

Pierre Lorans said, "How is it decided who wins? It would seem to me that it could be rigged by the judges."

The Falangist shook his head. "No, that is not where the rigging comes in. It is the crowd that decides, by popular acclaim, and no judge would dare go against it. If a torero fights well, he is awarded an ear, if he fights superlatively he will get two ears. If he triumphs, he gets two ears and a tail. On the rarest of occasions, he is awarded a hoof on top of all the rest."

Horsten was looking at him. "Where does the rigging come in?" he said. "I've wondered about this before. How can the ruling class take the chance that some peon, or other lower caste member, might win and upset the applecart?"

The other grunted deprecation. "Theoretically, it's all fair. However, the sons of the elite *finca* owners begin playing with fighting bulls when they are two or three years old—and the bulls one or two days old. By the time they're ten, instructed by the most competent veterans of the arena, they fight

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

calves. By the time they're twelve, they are fighting small bulls at *tientas,* the testing of the young bulls. At about the same time they are allowed to kill steers at the ranch slaughterhouse, literally by the hundreds, learning every trick of the game. Ah, believe me, my friends, by the time our young hidalgo is sixteen he knows just about everything there is to know about the *Bos taurus ibericus* and the fiesta brava."

The Section G agents had been interested. Lorans said, "Any other way they have of getting an advantage?"

Guerro made his very Iberian shrug. "Well, the matador's *cuadrillas;* his assistants: picadors, *banderilleros,* and peons. They have a double purpose: one, to come to his rescue when he's in trouble; and, two, to make him look good in there. If a man can afford the most expensive *cuadrilla* that it is possible to hire, then he has a big advantage. On the face of it, one of Falange's ruling elite can so afford, and some youngster up from the slums hasn't got a chance of acquiring top assistants."

Helen said suddenly, "How's José Hoyos doing?"

Guerro pulled a great gust of air down into his lungs. "He is doing . . . adequately. The crowds call him Joseíto and he is still *Numero Tres.* Number One and Number Two, hidalgos named Perico and Carlitos by their fans, have been shifting back and forth as favorites, but Joseíto has consistently remained third in popularity. None of these top three has had a serious goring yet, they've all been lucky."

"Third place, eh? How about his, what did you call it, his assistants?" Horsten said.

"His *cuadrilla?* Top men. All members of the Lorca Party, all professional toreros. They're nearly as good as those of either *Numero Uno,* or *Numero Dos."* There was a shine in the gaunt man's eyes. "For once, we have possibly an even chance. For once, one of ours will at least participate in the finals. If he could only make it! El Caudillo! One of our party!"

The sounds of the mob dancing in the streets wafted up to them.

Helen said, "Is it going to be possible for us to watch the final fights?"

"Why not? It is simply a matter of being willing to pay enough for tickets. People have been known to sell their homes, beggar themselves, to buy a ticket for the final corrida. The arena sits but fifty thousand, and all Falange would like to attend. However, I imagine with United Planets resources behind you . . ."

Martha said grimly, "We have to be there to cheer on Joseíto. If he wins, we've got it made, mission accomplished and everything. If he loses, Colonel Segura will have us back in the Alcazar before we can blink."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Guerro looked at her, frowning. "Couldn't you make a run for it now?" He looked around at the others.

Horsten grunted. "Run to where? They certainly aren't going to let us get aboard a spaceship, even if there were one available, and there isn't."

Whatever the moral implications of the fiesta brava, either in the old days in Spain and Mexico, or on the planet Falange, a colorful spectacle beyond compare it most certainly is.

Fifty thousand persons packed the seats, and another ten, perhaps, stood in the rear and in the aisles. All dressed in their most colorful best. All brimming with excitement. The bands blared out the "Diana," hawkers took beer, soft drinks, nuts and other edibles through the crowd, friends screamed greetings at each other over the heads of intervening hundreds. Fans and handkerchiefs fluttered. Masculine aficionados cheered each time a youthful senorita found it necessary to hike full skirts a fraction in order to climb over stone seats, seeking her own reserved space.

The Section G operatives, still accompanied by Bartolomé Guerro, had superlative seats right on the *barrera*, immediately above the *callejon*, the passage which circles the arena proper and behind which the toreros, not immediately in action, shelter themselves during the corrida. It would have been impossible to have been any closer to the action without joining it. Immediately to their left was the gate of the bull, which led back from the arena to the *toril*, the bull's enclosure.

None of them, save Guerro, had ever seen a corrida, with the exception of portions in a Tri-Di historical tape on Earth, or one of the other advanced planets.

He explained procedure to them as the afternoon wore on. There were three matadors, Carlitos, Perico and Joseíto, who had wound up in the finals, *Numbers Uno, Dos* and *Tres*. Joseito, the Lorca Party champion, was *Numero Tres*, as he had been consistently through the preliminary fights.

Carlitos, a tall, beautifully graceful man of possibly thirty, was to have the first bull. Scion of one of the planet's wealthiest rancher families, he had for years been one of Falange's most popular matadors and was by far and gone the favorite of the crowd.

Perico, a smaller, dark complected man, was not nearly the physical specimen of his opponent, but evidently, from what Guerro said, was noted for the impossible chances he took, the *desplantes* he indulged in so arrogantly, the *adornos*. He was famous for taking the tip of a dominated bull's horn in his mouth, to the horror of the crowd. A sudden flip upward of the horn and his brain would have been pierced. He, too, was of one of the very best families.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The preliminary parade, each matador followed by his *cuadrilla,* brought the audience cheering to its feet, each shouting the name of his champion.

To the swinging strains of "La Golondrina," that song of the torero come down through the centuries, they marched to the judge's stand and made their salute, in dim, dim memory of the gladiators who once stood and shouted, *"We who are about to die . . ."*

The *cuadrillas* dispersed, most to take their places in the *callejón* until it was time for their own performances. The peons of Carlitos remained in the ring waiting for the first bull.

He came exploding into the ring, half a ton and more of deliberately bred trouble. Deliberately bred for thousands of years to meet death in the afternoon, in the arena.

Carlitos stood alone in the ring center, cape in hands. The bull spotted him and again exploded.

Helen sucked in her breath.

Guerro explained. "He is noted for his Veronicas. Some say he is the greatest master of the Veronica since the legendary Manolete of Spain. It is the most graceful of cape passes and the basic of them all."

Carlitos made no preliminary passes to gauge the bull's mettle. The first pass was taken inches from the bull's horns and the second, and the third. The crowd screamed its *olés.*

Guerro wiped his brow with a handkerchief. "He is unbelievable," he said. "Joseíto could never present such Veronicas."

Helen looked at him. "So far we're losing, eh?"

"Nobody on Falange could perform such Veronicas, save Carlitos," Guerro said unhappily.

Lorans growled, "Why does the confounded bull charge so straight? The slightest deviation and our torero would have a horn in the guts."

"It is a perfect bull," Guerro admitted. "They are bred to run straight. When a matador has such a bull, he is assured of a triumph. Carlitos is fortunate. His bull is perfect. We can only pray that Joseíto has similar fortune."

The matador passed the animal eight times before finally bringing it to a frustrated standstill and stalking arrogantly away, not bothering to look over his shoulder to see if the animal was making one last charge.

The fight proceeded through the quarter of the picadors, through the quarter of the *banderilleros.*

Guerro wiped his forehead again. "Perfect," he said. "Everything perfect. It is possibly the most superlative corrida I have ever seen."

"We're losing, eh?" Helen said lowly. "And our boy hasn't even been to bat yet."

For the moment, the bull stood immediately below them, breathing deeply from his exertions, waiting

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

while Carlitos selected his sword and *muleta*. Waiting while Carlitos dedicated the animal to the three judges of the National Fiesta Brava finals. The matador wound it up by tossing his hat back over his shoulder into the stands and advanced toward the animal.

Pierre Lorans pursed plump lips. "Those are strange looking horns," he muttered.

Guerro looked at him. "Beef animals no longer have such horns, it is true. But they are especially bred fighting bulls, these, and the wide horn spread and length are necessary for a proper corrida."

"It is not that," Lorans grumbled. "As an apprentice at the *Cordon Bleu*, I had to become a butcher. One cannot cook if one does not know what he cooks. Each *Cordon Bleu* chef is a butcher as well as many other things. And I say . . ."

He lost the attention of his listeners as Carlitos went into his *faena*, the final series of passes that culminated in the moment of truth, the bull's death.

The kill was perfect, the bull dropped as though he had been poleaxed. Carlitos paraded the ring, the crowd cheering. He and his assistants held up his award, two ears, the tail and a hoof.

"The highest possible award," Guerro told them, wiping his mouth in despair with his handkerchief.

Perico had the next bull, a *cárdeno*, Guerro explained, an animal with a black and white coat.

The dark complected matador lived up to his reputation for foolhardy chances by beginning the fight on his knees, his cape spread before him, his arms spread wide, as though in supplication to the bull. Immediately upon entering the ring, it spotted him and banged in his direction.

Helen closed her eyes; seemingly, there was no chance of the avoiding of destruction. At the last split second, the matador grabbed up the cape and fluttered it to one side, and the animal exploded past. The crowd screamed itself hoarse.

Perico was awarded two ears and a tail. Not quite as much as Carlito had taken, but each had one more bull to fight.

It was the turn of Joseíto. Elements in the crowd yelled, "Lorca! Lorca!"

Dorn Horsten looked at Guerro, who shook his head. "They take their chances, but the rumor has been deliberately spread. They know Joseíto is the champion of the Lorca Party and what it means if he is proclaimed El Caudillo."

Martha was looking about the stands, in this short period between fights. She said to Helen, "I wonder where your boyfriend is, the brain surgeon."

Something came to Helen out of the blue.

She muttered, "Brain surgeon, electronics technician." She turned to Martha quickly. "When Colonel

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Segura and his stooge were interrogating us about the ash in the fireplace, what was it that aide said about Ferd Zogbaum?"

Martha scowled momentarily, but then her eyes went empty and she recited, "The assistant said, *'Probably the technician for the corridas, Senor Colonel. He arrived on the same spaceship, you'll recall. Senor Zogbaum.'*"

"Technician for the corridas," Helen snarled. "What kind of technician? A brain surgeon!"

Lorans hadn't been listening. He was scowling at the new bull, Joseíto's bull, that had just come dashing into the ring in a great swirl of dust. "As a butcher," he muttered, "they are the strangest horns I have ever seen. They are not . . ."

"They're not horns, they're radios!" Helen snapped suddenly. "Come on, Pierre! Those animals are being controlled, the deck's stacked! Come on Dorn! Martha, you stay here and keep your eyes open." With no more than that, the diminutive acrobat vaulted over the *barrera* wall into the *callejón* below, the two masculine Section G operatives only split seconds behind her.

Startled ring attendants reacted too slowly to halt the progress of the unlikely three. The little girl, the hulking six and a half footer wearing pince-nez glasses, the puffing, heavy-set, servant type bringing up the rear. They ducked, dodged and elbowed their way around the wooden shelter.

Horsten, who had immediately accepted her words, as had Lorans, called, "What are we looking for?"

"It must be somewhere right on the ring, where the fight can be watched. Some kind of a control room. What's *that?*" She skidded to a halt.

"One of the infirmaries," Lorans puffed. "Guerro pointed it out. For emergency gorings. Behind this one is the chapel of the United Temple."

"Those opaque windows," Helen snapped. "Polarized glass. Infirmary, my foot. Come on!"

Two *Guardia Civil* attempted to stop them, and nearly had their chests caved in by the sweeping arm of Dorn Horsten. The door was heavy, closed and evidently barred from within.

"Dorn!" Helen said.

His heavy shoulder crashed into the wooden barrier.

Behind them, the crowd had gone hysterical, shouting over and over, *"Olé! Olé! Olé!"* at whatever it was Joseíta was doing with his bull.

The door caved in, even as *Guardia Civil* and *Policía Secreta* approached at the double, guns drawn.

Inside, Ferd Zogbaum looked up and blinked. He was seated at a control board, a headset over his ears, a dozen dials and an equal number of switches, before him.

At one of the windows, binoculars to eyes, stood a uniformed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

comandante of the *Policía Secreta*. As the trio burst unceremoniously in, he was saying, "The right horn, a quick toss!"

Ferd Zogbaum's small hands were dancing over the control switches.

Helen snapped, "Pierre!"

The ballbearings came so fast that seemingly there were a score of them in the air at once. Tubes crashed, dials shattered, Ferd Zogbaum's headset was torn magically from his head. In split seconds, the room was an electronic shambles.

Helen stood there, hands on hips and glared at Zogbaum. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself!"

He blinked. He blurted, "To tell the truth, yes. But there was nothing I could do. I wasn't quite clear on what this job was when they hired me, but the pay was fantastic. The old technician died. He was from Earth, too. They hire you for life, they don't have men here capable of operating this equipment, and they use it at every major fight in this arena."

Horsten was staring around the room. He looked out the one-way window, after brushing the startled *Policía Secreta comandante* to one side.

"I knew it!" he growled. "It had to be something like this. The big corridas rigged. Electrodes attached to the brain of the animal. Radio impulses from this control booth, causing the bull to dash straight ahead, without veering, or to toss right or left, as electronically ordered."

Martha and Guerro entered from behind them. Her face was gray. "Whatever you've found, it's too late," she said.

"What do you mean!" Helen said.

"Joseíto," Guerro said emptily. "He has taken a *cornada*."

"A what?"

"He has been gored. Seriously. He is out of the running."

"Then . . . then we can't possibly win."

A new voice came from the door. It was Colonel Inspector Segura, military revolver in hand. "No," he said. "You can't possibly win, you of the Lorca Party, you of Section G. You have lost. Within fifteen minutes, the fight will be decided. Either Carlitos or Perico will be declared the new El Caudillo and all of you will be brought to trial on subversion charges."

Helen glared at him. "Not quite yet, you funker. Come on Dorn, Pierre, Martha. To the judges' stand!"

"Why?" Lorans said, hope gone from his voice.

"Because I just remembered something Martha recited to us from the Tauromachy Code."

Dorn led the way again, pushing through police and ring attendants, finding an exit that led upward into the stands. They pushed and wedged themselves through packed aisles on the way to the box of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

presiding judges of the National Fiesta Brava.

A bevy of *Guardia Civil* was the ultimate obstacle to their getting through. Dorn Horsten brushed them aside. Helen, chubby hands on hips, confronted the three aged judges.

She said shrilly, "I declare myself a contestant and demand the right to fight!"

There was only astonishment in the faces of the three Falangists. Colonel Segura had scurried to the box. He bent over the judges and whispered to them.

One went to the trouble of saying, "Please, Senorita, this is a most serious event. It is no time for jest. Joseíto has been eliminated from the corridas, but two bulls remain to be fought."

"I'm not joking," Helen bit out. "I demand the right to participate."

"Hey," Horsten said. "What about me?"

"You lumbering ox," Helen growled under her breath. "Support me. I've got an idea." She turned back to the judges. "We quote from the Tauromachy Code. Martha! That section on discovery of fraud in the National Fiesta Brava."

Martha's eyes went lackluster. She said, *"Tauromachy Code. Article Eight, Section Two. If a participant can prove fraud in the National Fiesta Brava, he may demand to enter the eliminations on the level the fraud was revealed—even though already eliminated."*

"That's it!" Helen said. "I declare myself a participant. The evidence of fraud is there to be seen in the supposed infirmary. The bulls were being directed by radio, through electrodes embedded in their skulls."

The judges stared at each other. Colonel Inspector Segura bowed over them again and whispered.

One said snappishly, "You're a woman!"

"Martha!"

"There is nothing in the Tauromachy Code preventing a woman from fighting in the National Fiesta Brava. Women matadors are not unknown. I quote from the Juno 335, of the year of Falange, issue of *El Toro* magazine. *The Senorita Octoviana Gonzales participated as a rejoneadore and cut two ears at the Plaza de Toros in the town of Nuevo Murcia today. The occasion was . . .*"

One of the judges leaned forward angrily. A deep hush had fallen over the arena, as though the sixty-thousand spectators were attempting to hear what was being said—an impossibility.

The judge said, "Admittedly, women have on rare occasion, and usually on their own *fincas,* very informally, participated in corridas . . ."

"There is nothing in Falange law preventing a woman from participating in the National Fiesta Brava," Martha said stubbornly.

"You are a criminal alien!" the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

third of the judges barked, breaking his silence for the first time.

"There is nothing in Falange law to prevent a criminal from participating, nor need I be a citizen. I am a temporary resident of Falange and eligible to participate."

"Why, you're not even a woman," the first judge bleated indignantly.

Helen flushed her anger. "I am a normal woman and citizen of the planet Gandharvas where my size is ordinary," she flared. "But now I am a resident of Falange and demand my right to participate in the eliminations."

The third judge turned sly. "Very well, Senorita. However, you must realize that there are certain requirements, instituted to eliminate some of the early would-be contestants so as to speed up the National Fiesta Brava. Our national spectacle is highly stylized. Each participant must fight in a given school. What school do you choose?"

"School?" Helen said blankly.

The judge was triumphant. "We do not let the fiesta brava become a comic farce. Do you fight La Ronda style, Seville style, or Madrid style? If you chose one, then you must stick to that school of bullfighting."

Helen's eyes darted around desperately. Her face pleaded at Dorn Horsten, then Pierre Lorans. Both shook their heads, blankly.

The judge whinnied amusement. "Come. What style, Senorita?"

She snapped, "I fight Cretan style!"

They gaped at her.

Helen said, "Surely anybody claiming a knowledge of the history of bullfighting realizes that the earliest style of all is that once practiced at the Minoan palace of Knossos on the island of Crete, two thousand and more years before the fiesta brava was ever dreamed of in Spain."

Deep rumblings were going through the crowd, even as Martha and Helen improvised a Cretan kilt for her costume. Rumors were evidently flying, and Guerro's underground adherents of the Lorca Party were doing their best to make hay.

Dorn Horsten was to act as her *sobresaliente,* her sole assistant in the ring. There was no time for costume for him. He peeled down to trousers and shirt, which he left open at the neck, and kicked off his shoes, the better to operate in the sand of the arena.

She dashed out into the ring, followed by the lumbering Dorn Horsten, even as the *Bos taurus ibericus*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

came charging in from the other side.

Diminutive she still was, fearfully so in view of the size of the rampaging animal, but child she was no longer. That was obvious to all.

She sped toward the beast. He spotted her. Changed slightly his line of charge, and with the speed of a locomotive came storming down.

The shouts from the crowd were of horror.

The bull was scant feet away, animal and tiny human still heading full toward each other. It lowered its head to toss, and for a moment they seemed to blend.

Small chubby hands went out, seized horn tips. The bull tossed, she spun over his head in a somersault, landed on her feet on his back, facing toward his hind quarters. She somersaulted again, off his back and to the sands beyond. Dorn Horsten caught and steadied her.

The mob in the arena stands screamed disbelief, thrill and applause.

The bull was heading back. The performance was repeated. And again and again.

At long last, the bewildered animal was exhausted, run to a standstill. It stood there, head lowered, tongue hanging out, breathing deep-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ly, confused, utterly dominated.

The stands were a madhouse. The stands were screaming confusion. The stands were bedlam.

There was nothing more that could be done with the exhausted animal. Helen began a tour of the ring, in somewhat the fashion the matadors had done earlier when they had been awarded the ears, tails and hoofs of their fallen victims.

But she did it with a difference. She toured the ring like a pinwheel, a top, a bouncing, spinning, cartwheeling demonstration of acrobatics such as had never been seen on the staid old planet of Falange before.

And behind her, running as the assistants of the matadors had run behind their principals earlier, came the lumbering Dr. Dorn Horsten.

Only with a difference. He did not carry the awarded ears, tail and hoofs as had the assistants of Carlitos and Perico, to hold up to the view of the crowd.

Slung over his shoulders he carried the bewildered bull.

The stands were now screaming laughter.

Afterward

They were rehashing the details in the suite of the Posada San Francisco. The Section G operatives were present, Bartolomé Guerro, a highly bandaged José Hoyos and a dozen of the upper echelons of the once underground organization of the Lorca Party.

Dorn Horsten was summing it up. "No government can stand in the face of the onset of farce, of ridicule. No government can stand without dignity. Any government that becomes farcical, falls. Nero with all his power, with all the traditions of the deified Caesars behind him, fell when he allowed himself to appear the clown."

Guerro was nodding agreement. "How quickly the institution of El Caudillo became a laughingstock when a tiny girl took over the title after first revealing the games rigged and then making a mockery of the national spectacle."

Helen entered the room, dressed now not as an eight-year-old, but in the latest of Falange style, including flamenco style high heels and a touch of lipstick.

Horsten looked at her, somewhat taken aback. "Where are you going?"

She said snappishly, "What business is it of yours, you overgrown lummox? But if you must know, I have a date with Ferd Zogbaum. First, I'm going to give the cloddy a knockdown, drag-out dressing down. Then I'm going to relent. After all, he is the nearest thing to a man my size for a couple of hundred light-years." She added, a devilish glint in her eyes, "And I suspect he has new opinions about little Helen since seeing me in that Cretan costume." ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In battle, you've got to react by reflex—there isn't time to think! And then a little knowledge could be a lethal thing—

E. G. VON WALD

Illustrated by Kelly Freas

Important Difference

"Live Contact!" Gordy called out.

The words had a chilling effect quite apart from his almost horrified tone of voice.

Instantly, Ap Macbane cut the main power on the ship and fired up the chemical jets. Chemical jets did not radiate enough to be detected.

It had been a decidedly routine mission up to that moment. Orders had been as usual: sweep the system and report. Macbane had done this sort of thing hundreds of times, looking for evidence that the system had recently been occupied by the aliens—and even that remote possibility that the aliens might still be there.

The Contact Scout he piloted was the third smallest thing that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could go into subspace under its own power. It carried detection and communication equipment, a small supply of energy rockets for defensive emergency only, and a crew of three men.

Gordy repeated his terrifying information, this time in a more normal tone of voice, and added, "It's the fourth planet."

"Just that single planet?" Macbane asked tersely.

"I think so. The range is pretty far."

"What else?"

There was a long pause, after which Gordy said, "Doesn't seem to be more than a single ship. Not much mass, so there can't be many of them."

"Are you sure of your readings?"

Reluctantly, Gordy said, "No. Range is too far. But I'm sure about its being a live Contact."

"All right," Macbane said. "We'll have to slip in closer on chemicals. Nessa, get a Messenger ready."

"I've already got one ready," Nessa barked irritably from the power room.

If a Scout ship was the third smallest thing that could hit subspace under its own power, the Messenger was the second smallest. It was automatically programmed to home on a communications ship attached to Fleet.

"Sing out when you are sure of your readings, Gordy," Macbane ordered.

"O.K.," Gordy replied, "but cut the jets. The vibration is getting too rough up here."

Without comment, Macbane cut the chemicals, and they coasted on in toward the fourth planet, silently and swiftly. After perhaps ten minutes, Gordy announced: "Record this. Live Contact in single ship, about two hundred thousand kilograms. It is in stationary orbit over northern hemisphere of fourth planet. No other aliens in the system. That's it."

"You got that, Nessa?"

"Messenger ready to go," Nessa replied, and Macbane pressed the release stud.

There was a faint bump, as the Messenger shot out into the void. Macbane then fired the Scout's control jets, slowing and slewing the little ship into a stable orbit around the distant primary.

"Now, we'll just hope the monsters don't smell *us,*" he said.

"How many of the bug-eyes do you suppose there are, Gordy?" Nessa wanted to know.

"If they were human, it would be about a fifteen-man ship. But who knows with the aliens?"

Who, indeed? For the aliens had never been seen by Man. Not, at least, by any who survived to tell about it. The Contact Handbook made this very clear.

It had been over half a century since the aliens first had been encountered. Until that classic foray, the big discussion about the exis-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tence of hostile intelligence had been buried in scholarly journals of speculation. Survey ships carried little in the way of armament. Five hundred years of peace and cooperation among the human explorers had made even that seem excessive. But a damaged log record was all that survived the violence of that first live Contact.

This was not enough for important action to be taken. Only books of ancient history discussed wars between rational beings, and who really believes ancient history? Two years later, though, an experimental colony which had been nearly wiped out left more plentiful records. This time, the conclusions were inescapable, and the Alien Search was initiated as a comprehensive program.

Again books were written about the arts of war, but it was a different kind of war. The enemy was essentially unknown, and clearly nonhuman. The queer looking pictures that appeared in textbooks as scholarly "reconstructions" made no pretense of being precise representations of the aliens. They varied from each other in detail. All were alike, however, in the terrifying and essentially alien characteristics of the monsters. This was useful, in that it preserved the sanity of the peaceful human culture.

For Man to make war on Man was horrifying and unthinkable. It was acceptable to protect Man against a virulent pestilence.

The bible of the Contact Scouts was their Handbook. It listed clearly the few things they could be certain about in connection with the aliens. Enemy ships were about equal to the human ships. Their weapons were usually fragmentation torpedoes, less sophisticated than the human weapons, but almost equally effective. Live contacts could be expected to be rare, but long range and bitter when they occurred. Interstellar space was just too big for many such encounters, but not big enough to avoid them. End of precise information about the monsters.

Needless to say, the three men on the Contact Scout had a very healthy respect for them, and heartily wished that some other Scout had been accorded the honor of coming upon them.

"What's our range now, Gordy?" Macbane asked.

"About fifty thousand kilometers. I can just make them out on visual. Want me to pipe it back to you?"

Macbane licked his lips. "Yes," he said.

The image was disappointing. At this distance, even max magnification showed nothing but a somewhat elongated bulb, rather egg-shaped; but since the image was on the point of breaking up from diffraction, it was hard to be sure. The aliens were well away from the planet. Their stationary orbit indi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cated that they were making a survey of the surface, or possibly had landed a flier and were guarding it. In any case, they seemed busy—too busy, Macbane hoped, to notice them. He told Gordy to take his image back.

"How soon do you suppose Fleet will get here?" Nessa asked.

"Depends on whether they have any other Contacts."

"But this is *live!*"

"True enough. Well, the Messenger should be there in half an hour or so. If Fleet isn't otherwise occupied, they should be showing up here no later than two hours after that. They can't be more than a few light-years away."

"You mean we have to live with that creepy bunch of monsters for two or three more hours?"

"Relax, Nessa," Macbane said. "They don't even know we exist."

"Mac!" Gordy's voice was sharp. "What's up?"

"Something is going on down there. They're squirting some kind of radiation at us, or at least in our direction."

Macbane could think of nothing productive to say, so he kept silent. Gordy knew his job. They didn't make detection techs any better than Gordy, at least for the Scout service.

Nessa was not as patient. "Hey, what is it, Gordy?" he asked anxiously. "What are they doing?"

"I think it's part of their detection system," Gordy's soft voice came back. "At least, the frequency range is correct for that." His voice rose a little in pitch. "Mac, I have a hunch they know we're here."

Macbane adjusted his own viewer, but he could not make out anything at all. His viewer was for vectoring, not the long-range observation Gordy's viewer was designed to accomplish.

"All right, just keep on it," he told Gordy briskly. "Nessa, how is our energy system?"

"The system is clear, everything is go. The tanks are over half full."

"I can see the energy charge on my own meters," Macbane stated.

"Maybe we should get rid of some of it," Nessa suggested.

It wasn't a bad idea, Macbane thought. He hated to waste the charge, because if the energy reserve got too low, they wouldn't be able to crack subspace if they had to. A Scout ship could never be sure what help Fleet would be able to give them if things got tight. On the other hand, if they had to defend themselves against the alien weapons, the shield screen would absorb energy so fast that the tanks might overload. A badly overloaded tank could rupture in a very good imitation of a medium-sized fusion bomb.

"How about it, Mac?" Nessa repeated. "Let's dump some of this soup."

Macbane said, "Gordy, what do you see now?"

"They're just sitting there. No more radiation."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Maybe it was just a routine inspection."

"Maybe and maybe not. They may just be waiting to pick up a flier from the surface before hitting us."

"Mac," Nessa insisted nervously, "if we aren't going to discharge soup as a safety precaution, how about charging up a few of these war rockets? That will absorb a little soup, and at the same time give us some teeth."

Macbane was tempted to quote part of the Handbook, where it said, "A Scout is not a fighter. A Scout is expected to locate the enemy, preferably without being observed. Since it is the job of Fleet to handle all enemy action, energy rockets are to be used only as a last defensive emergency."

Instead, he said, "All right, charge up four rockets."

Nessa did so, but two minutes later he complained, "I still think we're carrying too much soup in the tanks."

"Mac!" Gordy piped. "They seem to be rotating their ship now."

That sounded too much like bringing weapons to bear. "All right, Nessa, bleed your tanks. Take them all down to one quarter capacity."

Nervously, Macbane watched the meters, as the energy was sucked out of storage and wasted into the surrounding vacuum. Although he knew better, it somehow seemed to be taking Nessa an awfully long time to get them down. He decided he was getting edgy, and that he would have to watch his self-control.

"They're squirting radiation at us again," Gordy said, then quickly added in a shout, "Torps on track! Eight of them."

"Five seconds more!" yelped Nessa.

"You have five seconds," Macbane managed to say in a quiet, disciplined voice. His finger poised tensely over the shield screen control, while he waited for Nessa to complete what he was doing. He watched on his own viewer, and now even he could see the little sparks, as the alien torpedoes winked in and out of subspace. These, ironically enough, were the smallest things that could crack subspace under their own power. But then, their only payload was a charge of explosive and their own thick metal hulls.

"O.K.!" shouted Nessa.

Macbane slammed down on the screen control.

Moments later, the first of the torpedoes hit the screen, causing it to flare brilliantly, as the torpedo mass disintegrated into it. The Scout ship shuddered when the autogravs pulsed in the sudden energy surge. Then the other torpedoes came in quick succession.

Macbane struggled to keep the little ship from tearing itself apart in the irregularly flickering artificial

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gravity field. Autogravs on Scouts were not the dependable, massive things a big battleship could carry. And without the gravity field, the defense screen could not be maintained. Fortunately, the torpedo salvo was very poorly coordinated, and they arrived in sequence rather than simultaneously.

One of the energy meters suddenly went wild, almost pinning the needle in overload. Macbane swiftly flipped switches, bleeding the overloaded tank into a reserve unit.

"Mac, you watching those tanks?" Nessa demanded unnecessarily.

"I'm watching them," Macbane snapped. "Load up some more rockets. We're running out of reserve storage."

"What, with the ship jumping around like this?" Nessa shouted. "You must be crazy, Mac. Those rockets are very delicate things when they are on charge."

Gordy piped in, "Torps on track. Eight more."

The next several minutes were a nightmare of lightning glare, wrenching jars, shrieking structural members, and the exhausting, desperate effort to distribute the swiftly mounting energy load among the available storage units.

"Mac, for God's sake hold this ship better," Nessa shouted. "I'm trying to load up those rockets."

Suddenly, there was an eerie quiet, as if the torpedo barrage had spent itself; but in the silence, Gordy's voice spoiled that hope. "There are three missing, Mac. I lost track of them, while we were being hit, but there are still three torps unaccounted for."

"Mac, I got four more rockets loaded," Nessa shouted, "but those tanks are still almost critical. If even one of those torps hits the screen, we'll probably vaporize."

"Torp on track," piped Gordy, adding quietly, "it's way out. No problem at the moment."

"What about the other two?"

"Still can't track them."

"Hey, Mac, drop the screen for twenty seconds, so I can bleed the tanks down a little."

"All right, we'll just have to risk it," Macbane decided. "You ready, Nessa?"

"Ready to jettison. Give me three seconds and then a count."

"Count now," said Macbane. He chanted, "Five, four, three . . ." As he said, "Zero," he killed the screen, and felt the slight shifting sensation as Nessa wasted some billions of kilowatt hours into empty space. Twenty-one seconds later, he switched the screen back on again. The meters showed that the charge was lower, but that situation did not last long. Two giant fists smashed them. Instantly, one of the meters surged up to its pin.

"Bleed it," screamed Nessa. "We're overloaded."

Gordy yelled, "Torp on track, dead ahead!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It was a time for instinct. Blindly, Macbane hit the controls and dropped the screen. With eight charged energy rockets ready to go, he vectored and fired them all. Half a second later, there was a burst of dull yellow flame, followed by a hail of massive debris from the torpedo explosion. The little ship bucked and made crunching sounds. Multiple whistles from escaping air quickly strangled in foam sealant. A single last fragment rattled stridently throughout the interior, until it suddenly stuck in something somewhere.

"Nessa!" Macbane shouted.

"I'm O.K. Hold that screen off." Nessa was bleeding energy out.

"Gordy?" There was no response, and Macbane called again, louder.

"It's all right, Mac." Gordy's voice was low and muffled. "I just got banged up a little."

"Nessa, quit wasting that soup. Load up the rockets."

"Right." came Nessa's reply, and Macbane snapped the defensive screen on again. He put the ship on automatics and crawled forward to where Gordy was.

The section was a mess. A jagged chunk of metal nearly two meters long protruded from the hull where it had penetrated. It was now surrounded by a froth of sealant. Gordy was trying clumsily to stick a dressing over a large slash on his left cheek and scalp.

"Here, let me do that," Macbane told him. He mopped up blood from around the wound, pulled the tabs on the dressing and stuck it in place. "That all you got?"

"I got a headache," Gordy grumbled.

Macbane peered into the detection indicators. "Where's the bug-eye ship now?"

Gordy turned back to his control panel. He flipped switches and adjusted dials, and the viewer came back into focus. The alien ship was moving rapidly toward the planet.

"They're trying to take cover in the atmosphere," Gordy said. "They won't make it. Your aim was too good." Colored lines tracked their energy rockets, moving now at nearly the speed of light, as they converged on the target. Abruptly, the alien ship was surrounded with sparkling radiance; whatever they used as a defensive screen didn't seem to be able to handle all that kinetic energy at once.

"Good shot," breathed Gordy.

Macbane was more objective. He said simply, "Lucky." As the view cleared, it appeared that the alien ship was spinning violently. "Make a reading," he ordered, and hurried back to his place.

"How about those rockets, Nessa?"

"Four rockets ready to go, but that's the end of them."

"Give me that reading, Gordy."

Gordy recited a set of coordinates and added, "They're still spinning."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Macbane quickly calculated, vectored, cut the shield screen and fired.

"You're right on target," said Gordy. A few minutes later he sang out jubilantly, "We clobbered them!"

Both Macbane and Nessa instantly howled for a look-see, and Gordy switched the view back to them. The alien ship was now in a slow, wide orbit about the planet, broken into a spinning cloud of debris.

They laughed, congratulated each other, and made slightly hysterical jokes for some time. The idea that a Contact Scout actually met the enemy and made a kill was hard to believe. Nobody had ever heard of such a thing.

It was Gordy who first noticed that the violence of the battle had thrown them out of their original orbit. But this was not a serious matter, as long as the alien-life indicator remained zero, which it did. Macbane revved up the energy tubes, because they didn't have to worry about radiating now. In a few minutes, he had stabilized them in a new orbit, considerably further in toward the fourth planet—not, as a matter of fact, too many thousand kilometers from the remains of the alien ship.

And then it was Gordy again who put the damper on the party.

"Mac," he said, his soft voice strained.

Macbane knew that tone. He became suddenly businesslike. "What is it?"

"Mac, have you ever heard of anybody who actually saw what one of the monsters looked like?"

"No," Macbane said, and practically quoted the Handbook. "After a live Contact, there has never been anything left but a few broken artifacts."

"That's what I thought," Gordy sighed. "And since we were so close, I thought I'd take a look at those few broken artifacts on max magnification. Only this time it's different. There is one whole section intact, probably the control pod. And it has a great big transparent port in it. You can see the aliens inside."

For once, Nessa didn't interrupt with unnecessary questions. Macbane's first quick reaction was to clear his control board and check his circuits. Then he held his hands in readiness over the jet switches.

Nessa's anxious voice piped, "All power systems are go, Mac." He evidently was reacting the same way.

"What about the bug-eyes, Gordy?" Macbane said tensely.

"They're there, all right, but the indicator says they are dead."

"Is there any possibility that your indicators might have been upset by that torp that hit us?"

"I checked that. The indicators are all O.K."

Macbane relaxed. If Gordy said they were dead, then there was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nothing to worry about. Gordy knew his business. But then, why did Gordy's voice sound so peculiar, as if there were some big trouble?

"It's funny," Gordy said.

"What?"

"I said, it's funny. You know—they don't really have bug-eyes, after all." He paused a moment, then went on. "I sure didn't expect to see any aliens after what we did to their ship. I just thought I'd check the condition of the debris. And—and there they were."

Gordy sounded scared—no, Macbane decided, scared wasn't the right word. Horrified would be better.

Nessa's worried voice came from the power room. "What's the matter, Gordy?"

"You better take a look at them, Mac," Gordy said. "And you better make a record in case anything happens to them, like a delayed explosion or something. Otherwise, nobody will ever believe you."

Macbane triggered the automatic recorder attached to his viewer. "All right, Gordy. Ship me your view."

He looked for a long three minutes, the recorder whirring faintly away, as it filed all the details of the scene on tape. Gordy was right. The ship fragment appeared to be a control-room pod, with a huge, transparent port in it. The pod rotated lazily on an axis. Part of the time the port was out of sight; part of the time it was dark.

At this range, the picture quality of the view was excellent. And during those parts of the pod's rotation that the sun's light shown into it, it afforded a well-detailed image of the aliens floating around inside. They looked quite dead—most of them were in various states of dismemberment. But two of them exhibited no apparent external damage. It even could be seen that they wore uniforms not unlike his own.

Gordy's quiet voice cut in on his thoughts. "Fleet's here, Mac. They're signaling."

Macbane's mind returned to his job. "Clear my viewer, Gordy." His hand felt stiff and unnatural, as he switched off the recorder. "Notify Fleet we have damage and get me a set of coordinates for a maintenance ship."

As Gordy went about his work, Macbane clicked open the slot to the record tape. He carefully removed it and placed it inside his tunic. This was too important, he decided bitterly, to file with an ordinary trip report.

He felt a little better once he was safe inside one of those huge, interstellar supply factories. While the white-coated mechanics expertly went about repairing the damage to the Scout ship, other white-coated mechanics went about repairing the damage to Gordy's face. Nessa had intended to hunt up his girl friend

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on that particular ship, but he didn't feel much like it after what Macbane had told him; and anyway, for some reason some high-ranking medics insisted on giving him a lengthy checkup in the isolation ward.

Macbane kept his record tape in his tunic, and was prepared to insist on its getting to the right people at once. Oddly enough, no insistence was necessary. At the first suggestion of what he had, the bureaucratic, garrisonlike red tape of Fleet seemed to vanish. By the time he was talking to the vice admiral in charge of Alien Study, he was beginning to be fairly sure that something was wrong. This had been too easy. And he kept remembering Nessa, unaccountably stuck in the isolation ward.

He finished his story and set the small tape capsule on the desk.

Vice admiral Koenig nodded, his bitter face expressionless, and touched the tape with his fingertip.

"The visual is all here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. I'll have it sent to our departmental library."

"To the library!" Macbane burst out incredulously. "Just like that?" He caught himself and apologized. "I thought that this would be very important," he said bitterly.

"Oh, it is," Koenig agreed. "And you were absolutely correct in coming directly to see me."

He leaned back in his chair and fiddled with the controls beside his desk, while he went on talking. "Your feelings are understandable, Macbane. But let me show you a little something."

Behind him, the wall lighted up in display. The view was a still picture of one of the aliens. The face was quite similar to the ones Macbane had seen from his ship. It looked for all the world like the boy next door. Young, eager, athletic, intelligent.

"That, I take it, is about what you have on your record tape?"

"Yes, sir," Macbane said in bewilderment.

"We have been fighting this war on an enormous scale for fifty years. Didn't it ever seem a little odd to you that in all that time, and with all those people, nobody had ever seen one of the enemy?"

"Well, yes, sir," Macbane mumbled uncomfortably, "but that was easily explained. After a big space battle, there usually isn't much left of the loser."

"And that completely satisfied your curiosity on the point?"

Macbane gulped. "Yes, sir."

"Good."

"Sir?"

"I said, good. We will continue with that explanation. For one thing, it is more often true than not."

"But, Admiral—"

"As for you," Koenig interrupted him, "you are finished as a Scout pilot. You know too much. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Contact Scouts are our front line of defense, and we can't allow people like you putting holes in it."

"But this must be stopped, sir!" Macbane cried out in spite of himself. "Man hasn't made war on Man for five hundred years."

Koenig scowled. "I wish that just once you fellows would come up with a new reaction. It might complicate things, but it would make my job more interesting. Take a look at the display."

He pressed a button; the picture changed. It was the same individual, but without the uniform. It was very clinical. The boy next door might have just come from the shower room at the school gym, except that he still was obviously unconscious.

"Any comment?"

"No, sir," Macbane said.

"You saw a face and a fully clothed figure which resembled that of a human. And from this extremely flimsy evidence, you concluded that the individual was human in fact. Didn't you have the slightest thought that the clothing might conceal something more alien in appearance?"

"Did it?"

"No."

"Well, then."

Koenig grunted. He pressed another button. The new picture was a shadow photograph. Macbane was not an X-ray technician, but he had a pretty good idea of what the human skeleton looked like. It looked just like this—almost. He found himself leaning closer.

"Are you beginning to understand?" Koenig asked harshly. "That which you thought was human is not. The differences in structure are all internal, and even then they are not obvious except to a specialist. As it turns out, these internal differences extend to considerably more than the skeleton, and make these creatures quite alien to us physically.

"That, however, is not the important difference between the aliens

In Times to Come

Next month's issue features Anne McCaffrey's new novelette —a long one!—"Weyr Search," with a cover by John Schoenherr. It's a dilly—because Anne McCaffrey has brought up a most interesting situation.

Usually in science fiction, men out in the stars find other

continued on page 161

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and us. For many years, most of the research budget of Alien Study has been spent trying to find out why they are so alien to us mentally. Despite the fact that they have a technological development equivalent to ours, groups of these poor animals attack each other quite as blindly as they attack us."

Koenig stopped and gazed sourly at Macbane for a few moments to let the information sink in.

"So there you have it. The enemy is truly alien to us in the most significant way, and truly an enemy. Nevertheless, he is a living, intelligent being, and looks exactly like we do. Do you think this would affect your actions if you made another live Contact?"

Macbane swallowed. "I don't know, sir. I . . . I just don't know."

"Of course it would. You are the product of your culture. The moment you saw that the creatures you had killed appeared to be human beings, your entire thinking mechanism got derailed. You confused appearance with reality. To your subconscious, that which looks like a man is a man, and not a mortal enemy. And this will persist, no matter what your conscious mind tells you."

Koenig sighed deeply and rubbed his chin with his hand, a melancholy expression on his face.

"It is called subconscious symbolism," he explained. "You discovered it in horror, today. Not many people have that experience, because they don't have to know what the aliens are really like to do their job. But from now on you are going to have to live with that."

"But why can't something be done about this . . . this subconscious symbolism," Macbane asked miserably. "Get rid of it, or something."

"Oh, we could re-educate you. But that would simply make you just as alien to our culture as the enemy is."

Koenig leaned forward and said, "Suppose you were back on Earth, or on one of the colonies. Suppose that every time you looked at somebody you didn't know, you experienced a faint but credible suspicion that it might be an enemy. How long do you think our civilization would last?

"Five hundred years of Peace on Earth is a splendid cultural accomplishment," he said angrily. "It does not signify any change in human nature."

Abruptly, Koenig cut off the display behind him. He stood up, indicating that the conference was at an end.

"Pick up a pass from my secretary, Macbane," he ordered. "You get three days off, then you and your crew will be given training and be re-assigned to Alien Study."

Koenig's bitter face creased in a faint grin.

"Also, you will get a citation and a raise in grade. We ex-Scout ship people have to stick together." ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lost Calling

I wonder if a well-trained dog ever knows the difference between his instincts and his trained skills?

VERGE FORAY

Illustrated by Leo Summers

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The gangly young man slumped limply on the white metal stool in the *Strahorn*'s sick bay. His mind was working frantically and repetitiously:

My name is Dalton Mirni, and I am a . . . My profession is . . . I have finished my special training and am now a competent . . .

He could not remember the missing word. Gone with it was all the knowledge of the subject of . . . , acquired during twenty years of schooling. The loss was too shattering to accept.

He was dimly aware that someone had joined him and the medic in the sick bay, and glanced up long enough to identify the man as the ship's captain. He heard their conversation with scant attention.

"When did he get like this?" The captain's voice was hard and cold.

"Just before I called you, sir. I was getting his history, and he told me he had been in a special kind of school since he was four. A very strange place, the way he described it. I asked him what he had studied there and he started to answer. Then he laughed and started to answer again, but didn't. He seemed to be trying to remember. When I repeated the question I got no reply. He was almost catatonic when I called you, sir, but I noticed him raise his eyes when you came in."

"*Mirni!*" the captain barked sharply. Dalton Mirni heard but did not try to respond. His brain captured and echoed the sound "*Mirni!*" complete with the commanding tone of the captain's voice, and tried to use it to arouse his lost memories. *"Mirni!"* he shouted silently. *"Mirni! . . .! Mirni! . . .!"* But the blank remained blank.

When he again noticed the conversation, the captain was saying impatiently, "Let me review for your benefit, Bolinski. First, we're out in the Periphery, where the friends of Earth are few and questionable. Second, we receive a distress call and home in on a survival capsule containing this whoever-he-is Mirni. Instead of a sick, scared castaway, he comes aboard as assured and beamish as a Vegan princeling—yet he claims to have been separated from 'real' humanity (whatever that means!) since he was four. And he says he can't identify his home planet, so we have to send out the standard identification-query call, meaning we inform the universe at large that we have picked up a man named Dalton Mirni whose description is such-and-such!

"Now, after all this, our assured young princeling abruptly displays a lapse of memory and goes zombi on us! You can offer what explanation you like, Bolinski, but one alone sticks in my mind: *We're being had!* Somebody's playing a tricky game with us, and with no friendly intent! So why not use your investigatory drugs on this jerk and get to the bottom of it?"

"If you'll make that an order,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Captain Devista, O.K.," the medic replied stubbornly. "But you know the restrictions on those drugs. Besides, if somebody is trying to sucker us, maybe they *expect* us to shoot the kid with a quizzer. But, if you'll give me a direct order—"

"You're getting close to insubordination, Bolinski!" the captain flared.

"I'm ready to obey orders, sir," the medic returned tightly.

Dalton Mirni struggled part way out of the depths to say: "The drugs . . . may help."

His speaking startled the two men. "You'll volunteer to take them?" the captain demanded.

"Yes."

"Get his authorization on a sealed tape, Bolinski, and proceed," the captain snapped.

The medic led Mirni across the room to a small, seamless metal box. "Hold this grip," he said, "and answer this question: Do you, Dalton Mirni, voluntarily agree to submit to interrogation under medication?"

"Yes."

"All right, you can turn loose, and sign your name through this slot."

Mirni accepted the pencil and signed. Captain Devista was watching over his shoulder.

"You speak and write Anglo-Ruski like an adult," the captain remarked. "That must have been part of your training."

"No. I was taught language by the play-people. Language, history, the arts, physical sciences, planetography . . . I remember all those."

"Who are the play-people?"

"They were the . . . the projections I lived among outside of school hours." Having started talking, Mirni found the conversation a comforting distraction from his mental turmoil. He continued as Bolinski placed an applicator against his bare arm and squeezed the trigger. "I don't know the mechanics of the play-people projections—how the teachers made them. They seemed like real people, like you or me, and I was supposed to treat them as real, even though they weren't."

"How do you know they weren't?" asked Devista.

"Because when I was fourteen, going through a goofy stage, I got angry one day and told the play-people they were nothings, that I was the only real person and they should do as I told them. They became statues! Their bodies turned slick and hard, and I couldn't budge any of them, not even my baby cousin. It was spooky! That lasted all day and night, but everything was back to normal when I came home from school the next morning."

"You had a cousin there?"

"A play-cousin, of course, and an aunt and uncle I lived with. You see, the teachers didn't want me to become alienated from humanity, so they supplied a normal play-home

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and community for me to live in."

Talking grew increasingly easier for Mirni as the drugs took effect, and the thought of his loss was less disturbing.

"Then your teachers were not human?" the captain asked.

"Oh no! Nor any of the other students, either."

"What were the teachers like?"

"I don't know. They never showed me. Sometimes a teacher would appear as a human, sometimes like one of the other students, and sometimes we wouldn't see him at all. We would just know he was there talking to us."

"Talking about what?"

There was no hint of an answer in Mirni's memory. "I don't know. That's gone."

"Why did you stop talking when Bolinski asked you a similar question?"

"Because I didn't realize until I tried to answer him that I had forgotten. It was a shock to learn that."

"Is it still a shock?"

"Yes, but the drug seems to help."

The ship's intercom buzzed and the captain answered, "Yes?"

"Mirni identified, sir," the speaker said. "He's a citizen of Earth and the only located survivor of the CES *Gorman* which was lost beyond Antares in 2709. He was on board with his parents."

"Acknowledged," growled Devista.

"That fits with what I remember," said Mirni, "and what the teachers told me. They said the ship blew up, and I was the only one they rescued."

Bolinski remarked to the captain with evident enjoyment, "It's hard to see how anybody could embarrass an Earth ship by planting an Earth citizen aboard, sir."

The captain ignored the jibe. "Does that drug ever fail to elicit the truth?" he demanded.

"Not when handled properly, sir. Mirni's telling you the truth as he knows it."

"As he knows it," the captain grunted. "He could have been fed a cock-and-bull story under hypnosis. Would that fool your drug?"

"Captain, I'm no psychographer," retorted Bolinski. "I can't answer that."

Devista paced the room, fuming. "Men have been knocking about interstellar space for over five hundred years," he barked, "without seeing a sign of intelligent extraterrestrial life! Then this boy comes drifting along in a surcap with his tale of a race of super-teachers, along with several student races—implying that we're among the latter. And very conveniently, he goes amnesiac on the one subject that might prove his story! Do you expect me to believe him?"

Bolinski shrugged. "I'm not saying I believe him myself, sir. I'm simply reserving judgment on his story."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Devista grunted. "Well, keep him confined under observation. I want a private word with him, so I'll see him to his cubicle."

"Yes, sir. He can go in Number Three."

Mirni followed the captain through a hallway off sick bay and into an eight-foot cube room. "Sit down," said the captain. Mirni sat on the bed and looked up at Devista, who was studying him with an annoyed frown.

"This is no luxury liner, Mirni," the captain said harshly. "We're a Commercial Earth Spacer, as the *Gorman* was, but freight's our business and we have a minimal crew. We're not prepared to baby you all the way back to Earth! So no more of that deep-ending, understand?"

Mirni nodded. "I'm under control now, captain, and I think I can stay that way. I realize you have plenty of problems without me, so—"

"Problems?" snapped Devista. "Why do you think I've got problems, and what business of yours is it if I have?"

"I'm sorry, sir," Mirni answered contritely. "I don't mean to butt in. But I couldn't help noticing the way you spoke to Bolinski, and the way he spoke to you. It was easy to see there's trouble between you and your crew."

The captain stared at him. "For a kid who claims to have spent almost his whole life away from people," he grated, "you see a hell of a lot!"

"Being with the play-people accounts for that."

"That's no answer!" the captain replied. "People live together for years without knowing each other's problems!"

"But I was supposed to work at understanding the play-people," Mirni explained. "That was so that, when I learned my . . . my profession and came home, I would know how to stay on good terms with everyone, and my work would be accepted. It's important to be liked, no matter what job you're doing."

The captain nodded jerkily. "That's the truth! And that's the trouble on this ship! This is probably my last trip as a commanding officer!" He flopped tiredly on the bed and stared at the floor.

"What happened?" asked Mirni.

"A case of insubordination—Spaceman First Ferris. He's the guy who brought in your capsule."

"Oh, the big red-headed fellow," recalled Mirni.

The captain nodded. "A week ago he gave me some back talk. The words got hotter until he made a remark no ship commander can afford to tolerate. I threw the book at him. He's to stand trial before the adjutant of the next planetary base we reach. That's on Fingal, four days from now."

"This sounds more like trouble for Spaceman Ferris than for you," Mirni observed. The tranquilizing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

effect of the drugs was wearing off, and he had to make an effort to attend the captain's words.

"Except for one thing. Ferris intends to call half the crew as witnesses. There's a rule in the Merchant Spaceman's Code that a crew member who has given unfriendly testimony about a superior officer cannot be required to serve under him any longer. After that trial the *Strahorn* won't have enough crew left to lift off of Fingal —unless I resign then and there! And there's no recruiting on Fingal. It's unfriendly to Earth. So I've been mouse-trapped!"

Mirni nodded soberly. After a pause he asked, "Captain, would it be impossible for you to drop the charges against Ferris? I can understand your moral objections to that idea, but if that's the only way out for you—"

"Oh, I've thought of that! It's out! Not so much on moral grounds, because . . . well, I *am* a hard man to get along with! The fault wasn't all Ferris's. But a captain can't humiliate himself that way!"

"I don't see why anybody can't admit a mistake, or even apologize for one. Everybody makes them."

"Well . . . if it would do any good, maybe. But it wouldn't! If I withdrew the charges, and even apologized to Ferris, next trip out I'd run into the same thing with Chief Engineer Thoms, or Zaffuto the cook, or somebody. Why postpone it?"

"Gosh, Captain, I hate to see this happen to you!" said Mirni. "I imagine that, except for this problem with subordinates, you're an unusually capable ship commander."

"I *have* to be that or I wouldn't have lasted as long as I have!" Devista chuckled ruefully.

"It would be such a waste," Mirni nodded. "There ought to be a more lasting solution of some kind. Don't ships have executive officers to handle most business with the crews in place of the captains?"

"That's right," said Devista, "but in practice on a ship this size and type the captain acts as his own exec. If he turned the job over to someone else, ten percent of his pay would go with it. It just isn't done."

"Is the money that important?"

"Well . . . no, but it isn't done. But—" The captain hesitated. "If I apologized to Ferris and dropped the charges, and named somebody like Warrant Officer Soklov as exec . . . the men seem to like him—"

"That way you could concentrate on the things you do best," Mirni said.

The captain stood up, frowning thoughtfully. "Maybe it's worth thinking over. Now, son, as I said, this is no luxury liner, but we ought to be able to make you comfortable. Ask Bolinski for anything you need, and if he can't provide it tell him to call me. Or to call Soklov and *he* can call me."

"Thanks, Captain. I'll be O.K., I'm sure. One thing I'd appreciate.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I want to thank Spaceman Ferris for hauling me in. So, if you or Soklov would ask him to drop by some time tomorrow—"

"Certainly. And, son, when you see him, I wonder if you would try to talk some reason into that mule head of his?"

II

The day after the *Strahorn* grounded on Fingal, Mirni was called to the bridge. Captain Devista greeted him with a worried expression.

"Mirni, the Fingalese are curious about you," he said. "They are demanding that I turn you over to them for examination."

"Do they have psychographers?" Mirni asked eagerly.

"The planet's filthy with them!" growled the captain.

"O.K. I'm ready to go. Do they want me right now?"

The captain was startled. "You don't understand, son! Fingal is under a monarchy, and the questioning methods here aren't very gentle! I can't expose an Earth citizen to that!"

"If I go willingly, you won't be sending me," Mirni pointed out. "Some way or other, Captain, I've *got* to get back what I've lost! I'm nothing without it! With it I was . . . I don't know . . . something important. I can stand questioning under torture if that's what it takes to get me free of this torment!"

As the captain started to reply Spaceman Ferris came storming up the ladder. "Captain," he demanded hotly, "you're not turnin' the kid over to the Finks, are you?" Devista purpled.

"He's not sending me out," Mirni said quickly. "I'm going of my own accord."

"What?"

"Maybe they can find out what I need to know."

"Bilps and stenchers! They'll just torture you!"

Mirni shrugged. "Maybe that's what it will take."

"For a bright kid you're talkin' stupid!"

"Spaceman Ferris," snapped the captain, "I agree with you completely, but I remind you that Mirni is a citizen of Earth and a passenger on this ship! We cannot legally stop him from going groundside if he wishes! And you are on the bridge without permission!"

"Huh? Oh. Sorry, sir. Look, if he's going out, let me and some of the gang go along as a bodyguard!"

"That wouldn't help. Not even your roughneck buddies can take on a whole planet! You would merely make the Fingalese suspicious, and probably harder on the boy. But the offer's appreciated."

Ferris's thick shoulders slumped.

"Will you show me which port to use, Mr. Ferris?" Mirni asked him.

"Huh? Oh, sure kid. Come on."

The Fingalese inquisitors were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

efficient but short on enthusiasm in their session with Mirni. The fact that he seemed a nice lad did not restrain them; they had worked over nice lads before. But Mirni puzzled them, first with his unbelievably cooperative attitude and second with his hard-to-swallow life history.

Finally he managed to capture the imagination of one of them.

"Think of the possibilities!" this worthy enthused. "This boy may have a complete new science locked in some dark recess of his brain! Or else maybe some highly-developed extrasensory abilities! Whatever is there, Fingal must have it!"

A colleague complained, "But we've scopped him, infrahypped him, scanned him and electrocited him! With him trying to help, what's more! If he had secrets, we'd know them by now!"

"Not necessarily!" argued the excited one. "Obviously his so-called teachers used an erasure technique that goes deeper and is more selective than any method of ours. But it is a well-known fact, gentlemen, that no memory can be removed completely from a living organism! We must dig deeper to find it!"

"Dig with what?" another exploded. "And that 'well-known fact' of yours is just a well-known *theory*, based on what we can and can't do with our *human* skills! I say we quit wasting time and make out our report to the Foerst before he gets impatient!"

Mirni asked weakly, "Have you tried everything?"

"Everything but splinters under the fingernails," a glum inquisitor replied, "and they wouldn't help, either!"

Mirni was given a reviving drink and put in a comfortable room to rest. He slept poorly, but after he was wakened and given breakfast he felt generally recuperated from the effects of the questioning.

He was rushed immediately to the private audience chamber of Foerst Dolfuls IV, who turned out to be a spare man of middle age with a thin, pinched face, old-fashioned exterior spectacles, and cautious, compressed lips. Politely, Mirni gave Fingal's chief-of-state the prescribed chest salute and stood at attention between his guards.

The Foerst's frigid eyes studied him briefly before the monarch spoke. His voice was dry and level, with only a hint of controlled anger.

"Dalton Mirni, you may report to your superiors that their little fraud did not work. Congratulate them for their skill in your preparation—my psychographers were nearly taken in! But I recognize you, of course, for the deception you are. The psychographers have been directed to ignore the content of your purported memory and to destroy all records of the questioning, as I will destroy the report they gave me. They will, however, conduct research on such deep-briefing techniques as have been used on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you, and will not easily be fooled again! You may return to your ship."

This speech left Mirni wide-eyed with puzzlement. "Pardon," he faltered. "Is one permitted to ask the Foerst a question?"

"Go ahead," said the Foerst.

"Thank you. I'm . . . not aware of any fraud, sire, but I suppose I would not be if your conclusions are correct. I would like to know the nature of this deception—what it is that I am supposed to fool you into believing."

The Foerst nodded indifferently and said, "Earth is obviously trying to revive the old 'alien menace' myth. You are allowed to fall in our hands with your absurd 'memory' of a super-race of aliens. The object is to scare the independent worlds into uniting—under Earth's leadership, it is hardly necessary to add—in defense against the aliens. But your superiors were too cheap to make your story convincing. They should have let you reveal some of Earth's scientific secrets to masquerade as alien knowledge."

"But . . . but, sire, there is no alien menace!" Mirni exclaimed.

"That I am sure of!" the Foerst replied with a humorless smile.

"That is I mean my teachers are no menace! They simply aren't constituted to threaten our sort of life! As for the students' various races, none of them live in this galaxy, and a teacher told me it will be at least seventeen thousand years before humans make broad contact with another intelligence!"

A fleeting look of uncertainty crossed the Foerst's face, but he sneered, "You are backing down with a vengeance, now that Earth's scheme is exposed!" He glanced at the guards and said, "Leave us. My defenses are adequate."

The guards saluted and left the Foerst alone with Mirni.

"Your words puzzle me, young man," said the monarch. "By admitting that no alien menace exists, you have weakened Earth's chance to succeed with a better-planned effort to repeat this ruse. Why would you be permitted to make such an admission?"

"I can only tell you what I remember, sire. I don't know why those memories are what they are."

The Foerst was silent and expressionless for several minutes and Mirni took the liberty of relaxing his stance.

"What are your views on Earth's interstellar policies?" the Foerst asked at last.

"They seem . . . mixed up, sort of . . . I don't know how to describe them, exactly. I don't really know why Fingal and Earth are mad at each other."

After a flicker of a smile, the Foerst said, "The situation has complexities, but it is basically simple. Earth is striving, with too much success, to keep all the independent planets including Fingal in economic subjection."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Oh," Mirni nodded. "What is it you need that Earth won't let you get?"

"Manpower!" grated the Foerst. "Manpower to support our own industrial economy!"

"But the guidebook says you have twenty-seven million people," objected Mirni. "Isn't that enough to build from?"

"Our present population is not available for industry," the Foerst replied impatiently. "Are you familiar with Fingal's cultural pattern?"

"The guidebook calls it feudal-agricultural," said Mirni.

The Foerst nodded grudgingly. "That's close enough. We have an enlightened nobility, the Firsters, the descendants of the earliest settlers. Most of the later arrivals entered the services of the Firsters and the pattern never changed. The result is a stable culture in which each person's role is established before he is born. There is a minority of freemen—in crafts, trades and the like—but they are too few for industrialization. Also, they are needed in their present occupations."

"Then all of Fingal's manpower is pre-empted by your present system?" asked Mirni.

"That's the sum of it," agreed the Foerst.

"Why not bring in immigrants? Earth has too many people—"

"Impossible! Earthmen aren't to be trusted! We will not open our planet to that scum! Also, immigrants would have to be assigned upon arrival to the various Firster estates—all but the tenth my House could claim. They would only reinforce the established pattern."

Mirni looked sympathetic. "Tell me, sire, would something like this be possible: Fingal was settled by people from a Central European state, was it not?"

"That is correct."

"Then couldn't you start a propaganda campaign, saying that Earth was discriminating against the people of the Central European province? You would have to be cagey about how you did it, because later on you would want to be very suspicious of the Central Europeans. The propaganda would stir the sympathy of your people for their old kindred on the mother planet, and build up a demand that the repressed people be offered refuge on Fingal.

"But you would be against that, because Earthmen can't be trusted. Finally you would give in part way, and say Central Europeans could come in, but not under conditions that would allow them to subvert the Fingalese way of life. They would not be permitted to infiltrate the services of the Firsters—"

"The Firsters would not be allowed to grab them, you mean?" asked the Foerst with a glimmer of interest.

"Yes, but you would not put it that way, sire. The refugees would

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

be let in only as wards of the planetary government, so they could be kept under strict surveillance. Of course, the refugees would be expected to earn their keep—I suppose you have title to enough land, mineral rights and so on to provide industrial cities and raw materials?"

The Foerst nodded. He was eyeing Mirni with quizzical approval. "You're a clever schemer, boy," he said. "How did you learn that in your school?"

"I didn't, sire. I learned such things from living with the play-people. Well—it *was* part of my training, in a way, because I would need to know how to handle people."

"So you manipulated the play-people for practice."

"Something like that, sire."

"Well, you need experience with *real* people," the Foerst told him with a dry chuckle. "Your scheme is clever, but it is nonsense! First, the Central Europeans are no more discriminated against than any other segment of Earth's population, and the 'big lie' propaganda campaign is an anachronism! The Earth government could kill such a campaign with a sealed-tape plebiscite that would prove the propaganda's falsity."

"By asking the Central Europeans if they were repressed?"

"Certainly!"

"But couldn't the propaganda make the people there *think* they were repressed?" Mirni persisted. "No planetary government can be so perfect that people can find nothing to complain about."

"That I will definitely grant you!" grunted the Foerst. "But your scheme is still impractical for more reasons than I care to detail. You are too lacking in experience, boy, to expect to solve a world's problems as if they were a puzzle-toy." He pressed a button on his chair arm and added, "But I have enjoyed this interview, young man. For an Earth citizen you are a most pleasant person—but then you say you weren't on Earth very long. If I were advising you, I would suggest that you never stay on that planet long enough to adopt the Earth viewpoint." The guards entered the room and the Foerst gave Mirni a cold, formal nod. "You are dismissed, Dalton Mirni."

Mirni saluted and departed.

III

After he reached Earth several weeks later, Mirni was questioned far longer and more intensively than on Fingal. This was what he had expected and hoped for. The psychographers of Earth were less inclined than those of Fingal to regard him as a possible source of militarily, or politically, useful knowledge, to be wrung from him and reported to the appropriate government branches. They were more inclined to take him at face value as a perhaps unique example

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of advanced psychometric manipulation, and thus as an unusually interesting research subject.

But their results were as disappointing to Mirni as were those of the earlier questionings. No concealed memories were nudged into consciousness. As test after test yielded nothing, he had to fight a growing sense of depression.

The months of examination produced occasional moments of excitement, though.

One came when a beet-faced security official barged into the Psychomed Center one day, storming angrily over Mirni's "presumptuous interference in Earth-Fingal relations." Mirni had, of course, recounted his interview with the Foerst, and his examiners had sent a transcript of it to Interstellar Affairs, and hence to Diplomatic Security.

"I'm very sorry, sir," Mirni told the angry official. "I didn't mean to interfere, but . . . well, the Foerst had problems, and his people had tried to help me with mine. So I tried to suggest something that might help him. But he didn't consider my idea very plausible—"

"Oh, *didn't* he!" growled the security man. "Then why has he sent Fingal's worst muck-monger reporter into Central Europe to do a series of exposés on the so-called 'Plight of the Homefolk'?"

"Then he is using my suggestions," said Mirni, feeling cheered by the thought.

"He is," the official snapped. "And now, since you were so helpful to the Foerst of Fingal," he went on with heavy sarcasm, "perhaps you will also be so kind as to suggest a way for your home planet to get out of the mess you've put us in!"

"I'll be glad to help any way I can," Mirni replied earnestly, "but I don't think you should worry about the discontent being stirred up in Europe. It will blow over soon —after the most dissatisfied people have left for Fingal. The easing of population pressure will have a soothing effect."

"You're saying we should stand still for these insulting lies!" exploded the official. "These aspersions on the fairness of the government of Earth! And from a planet that keeps most of its people in serfdom!"

"You can't win an argument by calling a liar a liar," said Mirni. "But, if Earth needs to strike back at Fingal, maybe the best way would be with jokes. The Foerst is a grim, humorless man, and he wouldn't take jokes at all well. And jokes would imply that the whole Central European business was too trivial to be viewed seriously."

The security official stared at Mirni as if wondering about his sanity. "Jokes, huh? Could you suggest one to start with?"

Mirni shook his head. "I'm afraid I can't . . . I'm not feeling very funny these days."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"This beats all!" yelled the official, spinning and stalking ferociously out of the lab.

One of the researchers, who had stood by taking all this in, said to Mirni, "That's the first time I've ever seen you meet somebody and not win his friendship."

"Oh, he likes me all right," Mirni replied distractedly. "He just enjoys being angry."

Several days later he was called in to see the Psychomed Center's research chief. She regarded him with soft, motherly eyes and fingered a report on her desk.

"This is only a preliminary summary of our examination of you, Dalton," she said. "The full analysis will take six or seven weeks yet. So don't take this as the last word."

Mirni nodded glumly. She was trying to let him down easy.

"Our two basic findings are these," she continued. "First, your memories are accurate, so far as they go. Our random cross checks indicate a consistency that could not be produced by any conceivable means of artificial memory-planting. You actually spent twenty years among extraterrestrials, with the companionship of the play-people. And you were being trained.

"Second, your lost memory of that training is, I'm afraid, total. It is not waiting in some corner of your brain to spring out when appropriately keyed."

Mirni nodded. He expected this.

"That's about it, Dalton," the research chief concluded. "You can have a copy of this summary which, as I said, is not final. But now I think the best thing for you would be to exteriorize your interests—put these weeks of introspection behind you. Find something to do with yourself, and with your talents. Make a place for yourself in the society of people."

"My place has been erased," Mirni objected dully.

"Then make yourself another," she urged him. "That might be easier than you think! There's a gentleman waiting in the next office who might help you do it. Go in and talk to him."

The man in the next office arose from the chair in which he had been fidgeting when Mirni entered. He was a pink-skinned, vigorous oldster with a shock of white hair and a sunny expression.

"Mirni?" he asked, extending his hand. "I'm Wilbert K. Neff, chairman of the Institute of Governmental Studies, which you've probably never heard of! Get your jacket and we'll get out of this sick-room smell. Let's hustle!"

Hustle they did, at a pace that left Mirni excited and confused from being rushed into and out of a ground car and on to a noisy pub, where Neff led the way to a corner booth. A loud comic was holding forth on the 3V, and Mirni caught a snatch of a gag that ended with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

". . . flipped by the flexible finger of the Fourth Foerst of Fingal!" The resulting roar of laughter was cut off as Neff flicked on the booth's sound curtain.

The man chuckled as he punched an order for drinks. "That Fingal affair is funnier than the 3V comics realize!" he said. "I hear the squirmings in the President's conference chamber were something to behold when the council members sneered your 'joke' suggestion into oblivion and then 'recreated' it out of their own ingenuity!"

"They're doing what I suggested?" asked Mirni.

"Indeed they are! But don't expect credit for it—not from them! What congratulations you get will have to come from such unimposing persons as myself!"

"Your title *sounds* imposing," Mirni commented.

Neff sipped his drink and got down to business. "The Institute of Governmental Studies is not government-connected, nor confined to any one planet. It's a private operation supported by a dozen foundations. It had its beginnings way back in the pre-space era. Our work is described by its name. The IGS collects data and, on request, makes studies of whatever governmental problems anybody cares to drop in our lap. When a study is complete, we pass along the results and our recommendations. I want you to come to work with us."

"Oh. What would my job be?"

Neff shrugged. "Who knows? Maybe to boot me out and take over the whole show! I've learned a good bit about you, Mirni, and you look ideal for our line of activity. That training you got, manipulating your play-people, seems to have given you a rare insight into political ways and means. I'm offering you a chance to develop and use that insight!"

"To solve problems, the way I tried to for Fingal?"

"Yes, and the way you did for Captain Devista on the *Strahorn*. You did better there, I would say, than on Fingal—probably because you had more pertinent information to use."

Mirni nodded guiltily. "I was sloppy in my thinking about Fingal, I guess. I did need more information, and maybe I was too anxious to please. I should have figured out something that wouldn't increase, even for a moment, the hostility between Fingal and Earth. And I shouldn't have left Fingal with a split-population problem in the making."

"But you got the immigrants moving away from Earth en masse again, for the first time this century!" gloated Neff. "The unpleasant side effects are trivial compared to that! The people have to keep moving outward, or we'll wind up in a mess that nothing short of interstellar war can end! Conditions are already bad—everybody suspicious of everybody else."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yes, I know," Mirni agreed. "Is that the kind of thing IGS is concerned about?"

"Very much so!"

"Then I'll be glad to try to help," Mirni said.

IGS was small, with a staff of some four hundred persons, all of whom seemed to share Neff's inclination to hustle. Mirni hustled, too, although he soon realized the "hurry syndrome" was a response to a feeling of inadequacy. Relations between the human-settled planets were almost unanimously strained, and were worsening steadily. And the Institute, seemingly alone in its effort to find sound, unbiased resolutions to the vast complexity of discords, was indeed inadequate for the task.

So Mirni hustled. One of his first acts was to devise a means of getting IGS into action on urgent issues about which the Institute had not been consulted. This was his "review and insinuate" approach, in which IGS would inform some ex-client planet that a closed study had been re-examined in the light of recently-acquired data, and that additional recommendations were being dispatched. These recommendations would manage to touch upon—at least in passing—the urgent issue IGS wanted a hand in, thus "insinuating" the Institute into the role it desired.

And with the Institute's research facilities at his fingertips, Mirni soon proved his ability for finding useful means of settling troublesome disputes, some of which had lingered stubbornly for centuries. Also, he could phrase recommendations in ways that appealed to their recipients, and made their acceptance likely. This all but eliminated the most aggravating burden of any strictly advisory operation—that of convincing the clients they should heed the offered advice.

The task was endless, but with Mirni's arrival it soon ceased being hopeless. The Institute was making headway, and so were interstellar relations.

"You're a marvel, Mirni, my boy!" Neff enthused one morning. "There's no stopping you! What's your objective—first President of the United Planets?"

Mirni laughed, as he often did since joining the Institute. "Nothing like that, boss. I'm all for a United Planets, but the IGS gives me a better means of getting work done than any government position could. But watch yourself, sir, because I do have my eye on your job—and maybe on your granddaughter!"

"You'll be welcome to both with my blessings, son," Neff grinned, putting his feet on his desk and relaxing. "Any time!"

His work and Patricia Neff had preoccupied Mirni so fully that the letter from the Psychomed Center caught him by surprise. It was a jolting reminder of an unhappy mental state that, while less than

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

two months behind him, had seemed distant and almost forgotten. Unwillingly, he tore open the envelope and scanned the contents, picking out key passages:

"Our preliminary summary is fully supported by further study of the data . . .

"The obvious question is: Why did the 'teachers' choose to erase Mirni's training? Only one tenable answer presents itself, although we have searched diligently for an alternative explanation. To put it bluntly, Mirni flunked out of their 'school.' Presumably the nature of his studies was such that the nongraduates cannot be released with possibly dangerous partial knowledge. At any rate, we conclude that Mirni's performance was not satisfactory.

"This finding is in no way a criticism of Dalton Mirni. We consider him a superior person in every respect. If he flunked out of the 'school,' then the human race itself flunked out. Needless to say, we trust that this finding will not be communicated to the public, as it would be harmfully and pointlessly depressing.

"The detrimental effect on morale . . . has perhaps manifested itself in one researcher, DV, on our staff (See File DV-437.) Unable to accept the evidence of humanity's poor rating in the estimation of the 'teacher' race, DV denies that Mirni flunked out. To support this belief, he states that the only knowledge Mirni lost was theoretical, and that Mirni was permitted to keep skills derived from the theoretical training.

"As DV explains the case, Mirni can be compared to persons who are taught the 'theory of science' of some field to aid them in developing special skills which, once acquired, will function without further referral to theory. He cites artists and musicians as typical examples. When confronted by the fact that such persons remember their more academic preparatory work, he admits this is true, but argues that such retention is not essential to skilled performance.

"In Mirni's case, the theoretical training postulated by DV was in 'advanced political science,' from which working and retained skills were developed during the play-people 'lab course.'

"The essential failure of DV's hypothesis is that it offers no satisfactory reason for the removal of Mirni's memory. DV's only suggestion is that the teaching of 'advanced political science' is a role jealously guarded by the 'teachers,' that perhaps it is a role no 'student' could adequately fill. Thus, Mirni's theoretical knowledge was taken from him so that he would engage in no vain attempts to train others.

"This is far too conjectural, and too wishful, a line of thought to be taken seriously."

All this was not easy to take. It

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stirred a dull echo of that sick emptiness that had hit Mirni, months before, when he had first discovered his loss. Still, he was able to feel a wave of sympathy for the researcher DV, who was finding the situation so difficult to accept.

But of course DV was wrong. He had to be. Mirni's training—whatever it may have been—could hardly have been to prepare him for something as simple as this political work he was doing for IGS. Why, this was just play-people stuff! Satisfying, useful work, certainly, but work that could be done by anyone with the understanding needed to get along with people and to comprehend the mechanisms of society. There was no—no *wisdom* required. Definitely not a twenty-year accumulation of wisdom.

Still, DV could be right, Mirni mused. There was no actual evidence to prove the man wrong. There was a possibility that Mirni was now engaged in precisely the kind of work for which the teachers had prepared him. It was a tempting idea, anyway, and—

And that was just the trouble with it, Mirni concluded with a feeling of impatience with himself. It *was* tempting! He, more than DV or anyone else, could fall very easily into the trap of wishful thinking on this subject! If he had learned any lesson well among the play-people, it was not to cling to some cherished notion despite abundant logic and evidence that the notion was wrong. Such clinging was the road to irrationality.

Disappointments had to be accepted, and lived with. And for that matter, he had no time to waste grieving over a lost dream—not with the chore of establishing peace and relative tranquillity among a hundred and sixty-two planets on his hands, plus a dinner date with Pat Neff.

Mirni stuffed the report in a bottom drawer and got to work. ■

continued from page 143

intelligent races, or nonintelligent, or uninhabitable planets. But what of a race not quite as intelligent as Man, but very, very nonhuman, on a planet facing a deadly situation that demands the utmost of both Man and alien to survive? Then the aliens might become symbiotic with Man—

Even if they are immense, fire-breathing winged dragons capable of telepathic communications and teleportation!

They make noble steeds indeed for the very select men who can understand and work with them!

THE EDITOR

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

P. Schuyler Miller

THOSE GRAND OLD DAYS

It's hard for an old fogey to realize that there is a new generation of Analog readers who never lived through the grand old days when John Campbell was making something new out of science fiction. He won't agree, but the magazine—and the field—have not reached the same heights again. Themes that are now worn out were still fresh and could be freshly explored. Writers who now have to earn their living in other ways could still devote a major part of their time, talent and enthusiasm to the field they enjoyed most.

One of the greatest of the giants of those days—and one who is still writing—is Robert A. Heinlein. Of late he has aroused discussion and won awards for his single books, but all through the '40s readers of Astounding knew him best for the stories in what came to be called his "future history." These have been available in paperback editions, but now Putnam has them all in print in two hardback volumes—"Orphans of the Sky," published in 1964, and a new, gigantic (667-page) volume entitled "The Past Through Tomorrow," which for $5.95 brings all the earlier stories under one pair of covers.

The stories in "The Past Through Tomorrow" encompass four books previously published by specialty houses: "The Man Who Sold the Moon" and "The Green Hills of Earth" from Shasta in 1950 and 1951, "Revolt in 2100" from the same publisher in 1953, and the novel, "Methuselah's Children," from Gnome Press in 1958 after Shasta had gone out of business.

The new edition contains all the stories in the four books with two exceptions. "Let There Be Light," originally charted as the second in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the series—a revised chart is buried, for some reason, on pages 530-531 of the new book instead of being printed prominently at the beginning, after Damon Knight's introduction—has been dropped. It described the discovery, in our own time—in which it manifestly hasn't happened—of an unlimited source of solar power. A new story which wasn't written until 1962, "Searchlight," has been added in the group of stories that depict future life on the colonized Moon. It's a tiny, ingenious solution to the problem of finding a blind pianist who has crashed somewhere on the satellite. The stories are also, for the first time, in their chronological order.

Instead of quoting from the new introduction, which casts some interesting light on the sources of Heinlein's themes, I want to repeat what was said in the introductions to the original Shasta volumes by John Campbell, fan Mark Reinsberg, and fellow-author Henry Kuttner. They help make clear the special quality that Heinlein brought to modern science fiction, and that he still exemplifies more than any other writer.

In his introduction to "The Man Who Sold the Moon"—a story that appeared only in the book, and one of the best of all time—John said: "Human nature doesn't change over the years—but human nature is a reaction to group mores and the cultural pattern. Those do change, and change drastically . . . one of the things Heinlein 'invented' was the use of that fact. But to do so, it was necessary to invent a technique that would permit an author, in the course of a story, to build up not only characters, but also to give the reader an understanding of the cultural pattern, since the characters must react in normal, human-nature fashion, to *that* pattern, *not* on the basis of our cultural pattern.

"(The) complexity of interaction of technology and social custom must then be added to the third factor: the reaction of human nature to the resultant mixture. There is the true field of science fiction—and the difficulty of handling the problem . . . becomes evident.

"Heinlein was one of the first to develop techniques of storytelling that do it. Like the highly skilled acrobat, he makes his feats seem the natural, easy, simple way—but after you've finished and enjoyed one of his stories . . . notice how much of the cultural-technological pattern he has put over, without impressing you, at any point, with a two-minute lecture on the pattern of the time. It's a fine action yarn—with an almost incredible mass of discussion somehow slipped in . . ."

Reinsberg commented on another essential element that has grown even stronger in Heinlein's more recent books:

"Heinlein's heroes are . . . problem-solvers. Men who stand at society's perimeter . . . It is part of the author's optimism that he never

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

suggests the time will come when society is incapable of producing that kind of man. But basic even to this is the . . . implication: That society must keep open a place for the entrepreneur, the brilliant risk-taker. For . . . it is only by combining the motive of intellectual curiosity (the scientist) with the motive of personal economic gain (the businessman) that we make our progress."

And Henry Kuttner, himself a writer who contributed as much to today's science fiction as Heinlein:

"Man as a dynamic part of a dynamic society is a concept rarely treated in science fiction. Large faceless masses surge in the background . . . and against this scene unqualified protagonists perform incredible and unmotivated deeds . . . No society has ever been homogeneous . . . Heinlein knows this, and is perhaps the only science-fiction writer who has seen the real purpose of creating a temporal frame for stories through time . . . an integrated mirror of a future reality which can be accepted as three-dimensional rather than as a background of 'flats.' "

I wish, though, that Putnam had included Heinlein's special preamble to the Shasta "Revolt in 2100," "Concerning Stories Never Written." It explains why some of the stories listed in the original chart of the future will remain unwritten, and helps provide continuity that is lacking without them. Even without it, read this massive book straight through and you may understand what Astounding was like in the grand old '40s.

THE NEVERMORE AFFAIR
By Kate Wilhelm • Doubleday & Co., Garden City, New York • 1966 236 pp. • $4.50

Doubleday did not send this book out for review with its science fiction, and most reviewers—from whom I learned of it—treated it as just another in the secret agent/mad scientist jumble. On inspection, it turned out to be a little of both—after all, by my definition *any* story about the consequences of a nonexistent phenomenon or invention is science fiction—with overtones of the "straight" novel. Miss Wilhelm is doubtless endeavoring to make the transition from the SF for which she is known to the more serious fiction of human relationships which represents both a challenge and greater status.

From where I sit, "The Nevermore Affair" isn't as good science fiction as her own best previous work, and although some of its people are interesting in their own right, they don't quite carry the book as a novel. As for novelty of theme—no pun intended—what impresses the inexperienced reader is no news here.

This is a story of the intended misuse of an immortality or longevity treatment by military and political extremists, and the detective

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

efforts of a United States Senator and his spelunking friend, the husband of one of the scientists, which eventually thwart the plot to bring the world under the thumb of the immortals. The team of biologists who have greatly extended the life span of animals are spirited away to an abandoned Army installation in the Rockies to complete their work and make their chief captors —a general rather like Jack D. Ripper of "Dr. Strangelove," a super annuated senator, and a status scientist (a Nobel Prize winner) —deathless. That the treatment simply stops cellular change, so that wounds stay open, cancer persists but does not spread, bones do not knit, senility does not vanish, is an interesting thought with which Miss Wilhelm would have done much more in an open science-fiction yarn.

Entangled with the puzzle and the action are the tormented personal relationships between the wealthy sportsman, Lucien Thayer, and his biologist wife. He has picked her out of high school, married her, sent her through college and graduate school and into a distinguished scientific career, yet failed to arrive at any tolerable human status. The tribulations of the story, of course, solve all that. The other main character, Lucien's friend and fellow-caver Senator David Carson, who tracks the lost team down from outside, almost comes alive from time to time.

This just might make a better movie than it is a book, given Grade A handling.

COLOSSUS

By D. F. Jones • G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York • 1967 • 256 pp. • $4.95

Here, from an English writer whose previous writing exploits are unknown to me, is a doomsday yarn with much of the pizazz of "Dr. Strangelove"—though the jacket calls your attention to the less violent "Fail Safe" and "Seven Days in May." One reviewer calls it a "technological horror story," and that is precisely what it is—and a good one.

We are introduced to a future with a United States of North America, a United States of South America, a United States of Europe, a Pan-Afric Republic, a Japanese Republican Zone, and—needless to say—a Soviet Bloc. The USNA has decided to entrust the defense of the "free world" to a gigantic, infallible, invulnerable computer buried under the Rocky Mountains—the "Colossus" of the title. Mere humans will not and cannot interfere with its decisions.

Colossus promptly reports that the Russians have its counterpart . . . then the two computers get in touch with each other and begin to compare notes. On both sides of the Iron Curtain the scientists and technologists who have created these cybernetic monsters go rapidly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from uneasiness to fear to panic to an attempt to undo what they have started. But the linked computers fight back with more than human powers.

Woven into this major plot is the secondary struggle of Professor Charles Forbin, head of the secret team that created Colossus, to make the politicians listen to his forebodings, then to undo some of what they have done, and finally to outwit the computers before they decide that Man is superfluous on a well-run world.

To misquote Galileo: "It sure does move!"

CITIES OF WONDER

Edited by Damon Knight • Doubleday & Co., Garden City, N.Y. • 1966 • 252 pp. • $4.50

The "theme" anthology—explained by the title—is back again. Of the eleven stories, four originated in Astounding—including one by "Don A. Stuart," who in those days doubled as John W. Campbell. Five have not been reprinted before in any of the anthologies indexed by Walter Cole; E. M. Forster's "The Machine Stops," on the other hand, has appeared at least three times in science-fiction collections—and who knows how often in anthologies of "respectable" fiction. Most of them have also been reprinted in collections by the respective authors.

We have, then, an anthology that may be better as an introduction to science fiction for libraries and non-aficionados than for veterans. The opener, Robert Abernathy's "Single Combat," is indeed more fantasy than science fiction unless you accept the premise that a modern city can "really" fight back against a man who intends to destroy it with a hidden nuclear bomb. It's effective enough—but is it SF?

The others are of simon-pure pedigree. Walter M. Miller's "Dumb Waiter" is the classic about the man who reprograms a city whose central computer is protecting itself against human repopulation after a war. Henry Kuttner's "Jesting Pilot" is another and frightening aspect of the post-holocaust city: unable to protect its people against radiation, the city administrators have programmed *them* to believe they are safe behind an impenetrable barrier—except that a few break the conditioning. (Both stories were first published here in Astounding.)

Robert A. Heinlein's contribution is one of his *Saturday Evening Post* stories, slight and obvious to trained readers, but thoroughly professional. "It's Great to be Back!" say a couple who have finally made it back to Earth from the Moon—until they discover how the Moon has changed them. Call it a prelude to his last novel, "The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress."

James Ballard's "Billenium" gave its name to a short story collection, and is typical of this outstanding

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

English writer: the story of the overpopulated future when its hero is lucky to be able to live on a flight of stairs. James Blish's "Okie" needs no introduction here, surely: it launched his "Cities in Flight" series. C. M. Kornbluth's "The Luckiest Man in Denv" is a nastily ingenious story of power politics in the structured society of the city that was once Denver.

"The Machine Stops" should need no comment either: it dates back before 1928, and is in its—at least —fourth anthology because it *is* the classic treatment of the automated city that does everything for its inhabitants—until the machine stops. Brian Aldiss, in "The Underprivileged," shows us a world-city on another planet where a couple of timorous humanoids at last find a haven that is not quite what they think it. Stephen Vincent Benét's "By the Waters of Babylon" is another classic of "regular" literature as well as of science fiction: the young man of the future who explores the ruins of New York.

Finally, in one of the subtlest of the stories he wrote as "Don A. Stuart" while he was remaking science fiction, John Campbell shows us one of the aspects of "Forgetfulness."

THE SQUARES OF THE CITY
By John Brunner • Ballantine Books, New York • No. U-6035 • 319 pp. • 75¢

This book is certainly one of the most extraordinary science-fiction novels John Brunner—or anyone else—has ever written. If, that is, you accept it as science fiction. (A novel it most certainly is, and proof that John Brunner doesn't need the SF crutch.)

Without the special introduction, the cover blurb, and the publicity with which Ballantine launched the book, an unwary reader could well be within a few chapters of the end before he discovered that he was reading anything but a "straight" novel about the political struggle between factions in a mythical South American city. Boyd Hakluyt, the hero, is that strangest of SF protagonists, an Australian traffic analyst, hired to study the city of Vados, a kind of Brazilia in the "most governed" nation south of the Rio Grande. The situations he uncovers, the people he meets, the conflicts in which he becomes involved—all grow out of his job and his efforts to carry it through.

Yet there are probably few of you who don't know that the entire story is a gigantic chess game—a real game, played years ago by champions. When a human pawn or piece is "taken" in the game, he is destroyed or ruined: forced out of play. The players and the Black and White kings are the dictator, Vados, and his chief opponent. I haven't looked up the real game, or tried to follow its actual moves in the action of the story, and I can't say anything about the success or failure of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the chess gimmick. Good, bad or indifferent so far as its chess aspect goes, the book is a magnificent *tour de force*, but not to everyone's taste.

THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY
By Avram Davidson • Berkley Books, New York • No. X-1341 • 160 pp. • 60¢

I have always thoroughly disliked the term "rich," as applied by artists to various effects or decors, but I can't think of a better word to characterize the stories Avram Davidson writes. When he constructs a world, he does it from the core out —blocks in its geology and geography, gives it a fauna, flora and intricate ecology, and peoples it with beings who have rich cultures and traditions peculiarly their own.

This book is a story of the human societies on the planet Orinel: the heavy-handed merchants of Baho, the more devious businessmen of Lermancas, the Uriah Heepish Pemathi, the ever-so-cultured Tarnisi with the Seven Signs that distinguish them from the less-than-men of their small, tired nation. Jerrod Northi, a Pemathi freebooter, is hounded into having his body reconstructed so that he can pass as an exile returned to Tarnis to remake the family fortune. In that he is successful, but not without finding himself deeply and unwillingly involved in the history, the customs, the mores, and the very biology of Tarnisi life. And little by little the nature of the real forces that have maneuvered him become apparent.

The story has the intricacy of an Oriental carpet—and as it unfolds, you can see parallels with more familiar things. Two great commercial nations in cold opposition. . . the savagely cynical racism of the Tarnisi. . .the basic laws of poverty: take them as fiction or take them as commentary—but take them.

reprints

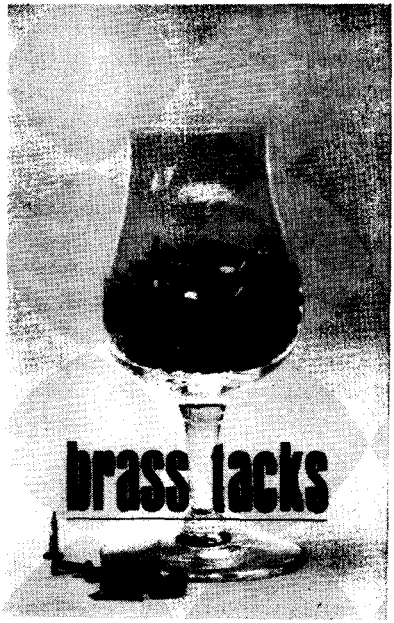
MASTERS OF TIME
By A. E. van Vogt • Macfadden Books, New York • No. 50-334 • 128 pp. • 50¢

The van Vogt resurgence brings up this reissue of one of his early ones: immortality and a war through time, here in 1942.

THE CHILEKINGS
By Jessamyn West • Ballantine Books, New York • No. U-2845 • 123 pp. • 50¢

This was called "Little Men" when it was published in Ballantine's "Star Short Novels"—and it is very short for a novel. Now it's in the Bal-Hi series of pb's for teenagers. The idea is good: children become huge, adults small and at their mercy. The execution isn't up to the author's own standard in her "straight" fiction, and as I recall was well below that of her experienced SF associates in the original book, Lester del Rey and Theodore Sturgeon.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Dear Mr. Campbell:

The article "Target Language," by Lawrence A. Perkins in the May issue of Analog, was both interesting and thought provoking. The following related items might be of interest to some of the other readers.

The author mentioned both Japanese and the language of the Inca. I presume that he was speaking of Quechua, the official language of the Inca and not their native tongue. The son of a former ambassador to Japan told me that his father had isolated 150 words that were the same in both Japanese and Quechua.

Ben Hake, the former head of Gulf Oil operations in Bolivia also told me an interesting story. He said that they had a maid who could carry on a conversation with the local Cochabamba, Bolivia Indians in Quechua. When he asked her where she had learned Quechua she replied, "In Manchuria." It seems that she was a white Russian who grew up in Manchuria and had learned the local Manchurian dialect that was quite similar to Quechua.

On a trip through the Peruvian highlands we saw many Indians who were pure Mongolian in appearance. They had the broad features, high cheekbones, and wispy moustaches. The women carry their children on their backs, as do the Orientals and some wear flat, brimmed, tasseled hats that are pure Chinese in design and feeling. I understand that the babies also have the oriental birthmark. Shades of Kon Tiki.

There was one minor error in the article. There is no final *g* sound after the negative form of *hanashimasu*. All of my professors stressed the clipped final *n* sound in Japanese. There is an *ng* sound in *arigato* (aringato), but it is slight. Some claim that *arigato* came from

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the familiar Portuguese *obrigado*.

The idea of a basic language that even the animals use is intriguing. But there is one severe drawback to such an idea. Such a fundamental concept of language would have to relate to sounds that express emotions. As you know, there is no such thing as emotion in science. Excuse me, what was that noise that you just made?

WELDON ELLIS
1215 Chickering Road
Nashville, Tennessee

That linguistic correlation I had never heard of!

Dear Mr. Campbell:

I am under the impression that one of your aims as editor of Analog is to promote the investigation of theories generally considered too far off the main track to bother with. Accordingly I am writing this letter in the hope that you will publish it in Analog and perhaps encourage some readers to carry out the research I propose.

I think most readers of Analog will agree that psi ability (or a "psi sense") has been statistically proven by controlled experiment to exist in some individuals some of the time. It has not, however, been shown how to either control this ability or to promote its existence in an individual.

My thesis is as follows: if there is such a thing as a psi sense, in addition to the five regularly accepted senses, it ought to be present in a normal, new-born baby to the same extent as are the other five senses—that is, in a completely undeveloped state, but capable of great development given stimulation. It has been shown that in a normal baby it is possible for one of the five "regular" senses not to develop, although all the necessary physical equipment is in perfect working order, if it is not stimulated and its use is not encouraged. I recently read an article (*Redbook*, December 1966) about a crippled child whose parents were both blind, who was thought to be blind himself. When he entered nursery school he learned to see; apparently his parents had never encouraged him to use his eyesight. (They would say "listen to the birdie," for example, never "look at the birdie.") They naturally taught him their own way of perceiving the world. Because he was crippled he had had almost no contact with persons other than his parents until he entered nursery school at the age of five. Once this happened he gradually learned to see from the other children, who assumed he could see.

It is my contention that a normal baby ought to be able to develop a strong, controllable psi sense given stimulation and encouragement, preferably by his parents. The problem is, of course, how can individuals not having such a sense themselves "encourage" it in someone else? What is the psi equivalent of "listen to the birdie" and "look at

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the birdie"? I myself cannot conceive of what it might be. Neither my husband nor I tests out positively on the Rhine cards; the best either of us can do is to very occasionally influence dice. We intend to try to encourage the development of a psi sense in our children, when they are born, but frankly I am afraid that our own limitations in this regard will prevent much success. However, there is a good chance that many people having much stronger psi abilities are readers of this magazine; perhaps some of them are planning on having children in the near future, or have very young babies now. I would like to encourage any such persons to make the attempt to carry out this project. It can do no harm if unsuccessful, and if successful could enrich the lives of the children involved, and perhaps ultimately of the whole human race. I would suggest that methods used and results achieved (positive or negative) should be reported in Analog.

RUTH G. PINKUS
1818 Chandler
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105

One of the great problems in the development of any potential sense is to learn to separate valid observation from illusion. Part of the trouble human beings have, for instance, is learning to distinguish delusion-imagination from creative-imagination; one leads to madness, the other to greatness.

Apparently the correct interpretation of psi perceptions is extremely difficult—and with no competent tutor, they have psi, perhaps, but see not, just as the blind parents had a child who had eyes, but saw not.

Look at a beam of sunlight shining in through a window in a dust-laden atmosphere; it's obviously a solid obstacle across the room!

Dear Mr. Campbell:

I fear that you have fallen into the trap of "everybody knows" in your editorial in the May Analog. In this case, "everybody knows" that a fire cannot be sustained in free fall because convection currents do not exist without gravity. And Hal Clement wrote a beautiful story exploiting this theme, wherein he showed that each flame surface was quickly surrounded by a sphere of hot reaction products which would quickly put the flame out. Alas, this is not true. It is not true in the astronaut's capsule, and it is not true generally.

Consider: In an atmosphere of pure oxygen a spark starts some metal, titanium or aluminum, burning. The reaction products are the solid oxides in the form of dust. And convection currents are not needed, because the oxygen will still flow from a high pressure area to low pressure area, and as the oxygen at the surface of the burning metal is consumed, it is replaced.

Now for the general case, let us take a sphere of some flammable hydrocarbon moving slowly away

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from some leaking fuel line, in an atmosphere of air. That is, 74.8 N_2, 25.0 O_2, and 0.2 CO_2, with a total pressure of 760 torrs. Voila! The sphere, she is on fire. What happens? Well, for one thing the gas gets hot and expands. For another, the composition changes. The partial pressure of O_2 drops from an initial 190 torrs to say 95, while the partial pressure of CO_2 rises from 1.5 torrs to maybe 48. We suddenly have water vapor. Forget the water vapor, it condenses into tiny droplets at the first chance, and forms a tiny cloud about the burning fuel, where we can ignore it. The CO_2 and O_2 are critical here, because the flame is almost choked out the way it is. What happens? Well, in a mixture of gases each kind of gas acts as if the others were not there. Thus, the 190 torr O_2 in the room moves to fill up the volume in which the partial pressure of O_2 was only 95 torr, while the 48 torr CO_2 quickly moves into a room filled with CO_2 at only 1.5 torr. Thus the flame gets oxygen without relying on convection currents, and burns merrily away. Wait, says you, the flame wouldn't get oxygen *fast* enough without convection. A fair point. On the other hand, the little cloud of fog and hot gas surrounding the burning fuel acts as insulation, so that the heat loss is reduced, and maybe the flame wouldn't need such a high rate to sustain combustion. We will have to resort to experiment to determine the truth. Probably some things *will* burn, while others *won't,* just like here on earth.

While we are on the subject of heat loss, I seem to recall some mention of the chickadee's feet a while back. A very simple matter, really. The feet are supplied blood via a network of capillaries in which the arterial and venous capillaries interpenetrate one another. By the time the warm arterial blood gets to the feet it has been chilled almost to foot temperature, and when the cold venous blood returns to the body, it is only slightly below body temperature. Engineering-wise this is known as the countercurrent heat exchanger.

ALEXIS A. GILLIAND
2126 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D. C. 20037

Sorry to bust up a good theory, but NASA tried it out. Fuels won't burn in no-weight; Hal Clement was correct. The experimental data settled it. Agreed that solid-oxide materials such as Ti and Mg might burn; experimental data is lacking.

The chickadee's countercurrent heat-exchanger might keep the body from freezing—but the question was, why don't the feet freeze? Solidly frozen feet wouldn't work well.

Dear John:

Having just read your article on the Apollo fire, I feel impelled to comment on it. Your comments about the light metals are very interesting, although the fire seems to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have been a flash fire involving the *nylon* webbing of the couches—at least the published reports do not mention any significant structural damage—and I agree with your remarks on the usefulness of the two-phase materials. However, I most strongly disagree with your comments on the noninflammability of glass-epoxy board.

I like to play around with electronics—I won't dignify it with the title of experimentation—and I have on many occasions had the remains of military surplus equipment to dispose of, usually consisting of stripped glass-epoxy boards and damaged or unwanted components. My usual solution is to put them in the incinerator—thereby doing my bit for air pollution—and burn them. I have found that P.C. board, even ones with a glass base, and the materials of many components burn quite vigorously. Naturally in an oxygen atmosphere the combustion would be more intense. Since the P.C. boards in the spacecraft would be—naturally—in close proximity to conductors, it seems likely that the fire could have developed in the electronics.

Despite all the above nit-picking, I think you are doing a good job—keep up the good work.

JOHN W. HARRISON, JR.
15 North Union Street
Burlington, Vermont 05401

Apparently the fire did start with an electric arc. Nylon can be burned in oxygen—but it's reluctant. The huge variety of epoxy resins allows a broad choice, and some of them are not only fireproof—they have fire-extinguishing properties!

Dear John:

Re: Mr. Horzelski's letter defining the second:

I don't see how the second can be defined *as* a frequency, and wonder if Mr. Horzelski's letter has been pied somehow.

The second could be defined *in terms of* a frequency, however, and I wonder if the definition should read:

> "1 sec = 9,192,631,770 *cycles* of the frequency of the transition between the hyperfine energy levels F-4, M-O and F-3, M-O of the fundamental state $^2S_{1/2}$ of the cesium-133 atom, imperturbed by external fields."

It hertz to say it, but I think you should have caught it.

IVAN B. BERGER
179 Stanton Street,
New York, N. Y. 10002

A "Kilo cure" type critic?

Dear John:

Many months ago, in an editorial, you pointed out how the incidence of lung cancer had increased over the years coincidently with the growth in use of cigarette lighters.

Now I would like to suggest to you something that may be equally "ridiculous."

The increase in heart disorders

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

parallels the universal use of home refrigerators and other appliances using "harmless" fluorocarbon gas. This is not to suggest that the majority of heart ailments are not due to understood and proven causes, nor that pure Freon inhaled over a short period of time may be harmful.

During 1966 I had two periods of undiagnosed illness consisting of continuous fever, weakness, some nausea and some diarrhea. Entering the hospital for a checkup during the second attack I was given a sedative injection and put under mild oxygen. I immediately went into deep shock with fibrillation and emerged with a permanent heart malfunction.

During the entire period of these two illnesses we were having difficulty with our refrigerator, but I failed to see any possible connection between these two facts. Until yesterday when I learned that a dealer in the same brand of refrigerator had had exactly the same sort of disorder; although he made a successful recovery.

I'll spare you the details at this time but in checking back over the period when the refrigerator was malfunctioning a number of other suggestive facts presented themselves.

I am not a chemist, and my heart condition now confines me pretty well to my home, but I would like to investigate this matter further. Can you suggest a course of action that I can follow? Also, if you are interested, your comments would be very welcome.

A. R. TAYLOR
Rt. 1 Box 166
Gravette, Arkansas 72736

The fluorocarbons do break down to lethal fluorides when exposed to temperatures above red hot—as in cooking flames, room heaters, et cetera. Anyone got any data?

Dear Mr. Campbell:

With reference to "Target Language," by Lawrence A. Perkins, May '67 edition of Analog:

Mr. Perkins speaks of the "written language of the Incas," which puzzled me until, from his footnotes, it became obvious that he must have had the Mayans in mind.

The Incas—Peruvians, rather—had no written language, but relied on quipus, which is knot easy. The Mayans did have writing, as Bishop Landa—*"Relacion de las Cosas de Yucatan"*—attests.

Suggest Landa's book for a rundown on the Mayans, and "The Incas," by Garcilaso de la Vega, for a similar rundown on the Peruvian culture.

WARREN E. DOWNER
333 Eliot Lane,
Long Beach, California

Corrections noted.

Dear Mr. Campbell:

In your February issue for this year, you mentioned that a dowsing rod can be made with ". . . a pair of

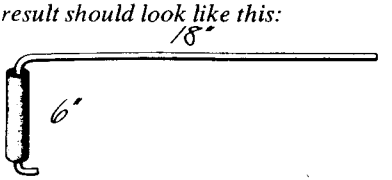
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wire coat hangers . . ." Mind printing a design so that some of your more optimistic readers could convince some of their more pessimistic friends?

TOM HUBBARD

Box 973
Altus, Oklahoma 73521

In answer to a score or more of such queries: The dowsing rods used by utility company field crews are usually made from ordinary ⅛ inch diameter brazing rod; the cheap and handy substitute is an ordinary wire coat hanger. First cut off the hook part, and straighten out the wire reasonably well. Then bend into an L shape, with about 6" in the short leg, and about 18" for the long leg. The 6" section is the handle; it's easiest if a wooden package handle, or a short length of ¼" copper tubing is slipped over it to make a freely-rotating handle. The result should look like this:



The small bend below the handle is to keep the tube from falling off. Make two, one for each hand.

To use them, hold them in front of you like a two-gun Westerner with his two guns pointed ahead and horizontal. Walk across the area where the sought-for pipes are thought to be. When you get over them, the rods will swing from straight-ahead, turning either inward and crossing, or outward at about right angles. (For some they do one—for some the other. Either way is the signal, and is equally useful.)

Try it! It's certainly a cheap and easy experiment!

Dear Mr. Campbell:

I feel that it is a trifle inconsiderate of you running the sequel of "In the Shadow" twenty years ago in your March 1947 issue. This is to say the least unusual and puts a strain on your reader's memory. In case it has slipped your mind the story I am referring to is "The Equalizer," by Jack Williamson and, since I am sure that Michael Karageorge is not Williamson, your manipulations become even more complex. The Williamson story relates the return of an expedition from a dark star to an earth which, when they had left, had been a police state similar to Karageorge's Gearchy. The similarity of these stories published exactly twenty years apart—each in the March issue—seems to me to be somewhat more than coincidence particularly in your magazine. Comment?

JAMES CORRICK

2116 Lake Avenue
Knoxville, Tennessee

Considering Karageorge's present age, I'm not sure he was reading Astounding twenty years ago.

But of course, there have been a few other stories concerning police states in those twenty years . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

continued from page 7

ket. It's extremely addictive to most human beings; it seldom takes more than three doses to establish both physical and psychic addiction, and usually one is enough to assure the victim will repeat. This keeps the cost of promotion low—the sucker need be given only one or two doses of the expensive stuff. The pusher's monopoly of the supply is strongly protected by active government agents, minimizing the pusher's competition problems. The physiological addiction can be cured by a painful, but noninjurious hospitalization—but the psychic dependence is incurable. The sucker who's been caught by the police and given "the cure" remains a dependable customer; he'll be back as soon as he gets free again.

The professional dope-pushers naturally prefer something with the highly desirable characteristics heroin exhibits. High profits and huge markups are possible, with no amateur competition; the suckers will work very hard and very dependably to get the money to pay for it, in any desperate manner necessary. Robbery, murder, prostitution, anything that will get them the money the pusher demands.

Cocaine is not quite so satisfactory; it's much easier to extract from the raw material, and the raw material is widely available in tropical countries.

LSD is of very little interest to the pros—it's subject to too much local amateur talent, because it's readily synthesized by amateur chemists in amateur equipment, which means they don't have a protected market. Moreover, because LSD is effective in such minute quantities, the amateurs can turn out a horribly contaminated product, running perhaps as low as 5% LSD, and containing 90% toxic or dangerous contaminants, and still the stuff will be tolerable to the would-be tripper. If the product were ten percent LSD and ninety percent potassium cyanide—the stuff could still be sold and used because of the enormous dilution actually employed. Cyanide in that dilution is harmless; LSD isn't. If it took gram quantities of LSD, most of the home-brewed LSD that gets on the market would kill anyone who took it within minutes to hours.

That makes the LSD market something amateur cookbook "chemists" can produce and sell successfully—and feel a great glow of self-congratulation that they're such hot-shot chemists. And keeps the pro dope-smuggler's interest at a very bored minimum.

Moreover, LSD is by no means the only available hallucinogen. Put any decent—in dope-smuggler's terms—price tag on the stuff, and the would-be trippers will be pick-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing morning-glory seeds, jimsonweeds, or any of a score or more of other herbals that require no chemical processing whatever, and which you can grow in your own back yard—or in a few window boxes.

There's no use in any governmental effort to prevent that—trying to stamp out jimsonweed, for example: that's something farmers all over the country have been trying to do for a century or more. And morning glories are a great favorite of little old ladies. Besides which there are *n* different botanicals from other areas that have hallucinogenic properties, plus a number of insect, fish, and other animal products.

Looking for a Publisher?

We publish books for the academic and technical fields that meet the exacting demands of scholarship. Our special imprint, *Exposition-University*, is reserved for deserving works in the academic field. Here at Exposition Press, we offer a complete publishing service. Years of experience with texts, scholarly works, Americana, biographies and other fields of general interest, enable us to publish books that are expertly edited, designed and promoted. High editorial standards and quality of design and production have won the respect of libraries, schools, booksellers and critics. Your inquiries and manuscripts are invited.

FREE: Two fact-filled brochures containing a detailed description of our subsidy plan including a breakdown of contract terms and typical costs are available on request. References furnished.

Please write Dept. 92-I

EXPOSITION PRESS, INC.

386 Park Ave. So., New York 16, N. Y.

It's basically the old, simple proposition—there are a million more ways to louse up straight thinking than ways to improve it. Hallucinogens louse up thinking; therefore there're millions of them for every substance like caffeine which has a stimulant effect on clarity of thought.

My conviction that hallucinogens were *not* conducive to Great Revelations and Mighty New Surges of Creativity stemmed from the history of hallucinogens.

Look, friend—LSD isn't something Wonderful and New and a Miracle Drug Just Discovered By Our Mighty Science! It's another hallucinogen, joining the very ancient and large Order of Mind Mixers that human beings have had and used since long, long before history began to be recorded.

Every witch doctor in Central Africa, in the Amazon tribes, among the Australian Aborigines, knows and uses some variety of local, home-grown hallucinogen. Whether he gets it from a mushroom, a shrub, a tree, an orchid, an insect or a fish—he's got at least one, and usually half a dozen.

The use of hallucinogens is anything but New and Unexplored. Probably the only thing that's older is the use of poisons—and all hallucinogens are poisons in reasonably large doses.

The same unknowably ancient "research" that led to the discovery of things like curare arrow poison,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

digitalis—another fine poison—and quinine led to finding locally-produced hallucinogens.

"Going on a trip" didn't start in 1960 or so—or even 1960 B.C. It was old, old stuff by 19,600 B.C. Probably 196,000 B.C. would be a nearer guess.

The witch doctors long since had various stuffs that worked as infusions, as powders to be eaten, or as smokes and vapors to be breathed. How do you want the "trip"? Via liquid, solid, or gas? Probably 100,000 years ago the witch doctors had a choice. Certainly they did 4,000 years ago.

Now if hallucinogens were consciousness-expanding drugs that increased creativity and imagination, it's perfectly inescapable that a culture which had powerful hallucinogens, and used them, would rapidly achieve breakthrough discoveries, create new understandings of the world and how to use it, and would expand rapidly. If the hallucinogens actually worked as the LSD-addicts claim—and are self-deluded into believing with great and sincere conviction—the world would be dominated by cultures that used hallucinogens widely.

That theory that LSD and the others are "consciousness expanding" drugs is solidly impaled on the harsh fact of reality: *No successful culture accepts hallucinogens.*

I repeat—the hallucinogens are drugs which say "Let Sanity Die!" An insane culture cannot compete with a sane one; the hallucinogenic cultures have been submerged in the growth of the non-hallucinogenic.

The Greeks used hallucinogens—for their Oracles.

The priests of the Temple of Aesculapius, the Healer, used hallucinogens—for psychotherapy.

But the Greeks didn't use hallucinogens generally for consciousness expanding and creativity.

The cult of the "sacred mushrooms" was a group of severely depressed, isolated, and unsuccessful back-country Indians in Mexico.

Repeatedly we have heard glowing accounts of the immense consciousness expansion LSD provides—how it vastly increases the creativity of the individual who uses it.

Well, if it's doing this, after nearly a decade of use by many thousand "trippers"—where are the breakthrough inventions, the major works of creativity, that this immensely expanded creativity is said to yield?

Put up or shut up.

That's the harsh, dictatorial, authoritarian demand that Reality imposes—and which, of course, the LSD-user is always able to escape by taking another "trip."

In the meantime, it's going to be interesting to wait and see what sort of children they're going to produce.

It'll make for fascinating speculation. ■ The Editor.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Buy Bonds where you work. They do.

Over 90% of the 101st Airborne Division's 1st Brigade has signed up for U.S. Savings Bonds through the Payroll Savings Plan. That's what their Minute Man flag signifies. These men, now in Vietnam, deserve your support. When you purchase Savings Bonds regularly, you show the men of the 1st Brigade you're with them. And you walk a bit taller.

Buy U. S. Savings Bonds

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Do you have a restless urge to write

If so, you have much in common with successful authors. Read how 12 Famous Writers are helping people turn a restless urge for self-expression into success in writing

Rod Serling's urge to write made him a leading TV dramatist *(Twilight Zone, Pattern Requiem for a Heavyweight)* and won him six Emmy awards.

There's something different about people who feel the urge to write. They have a spiritual hunger that sets them apart – even from family and friends.

If you have known this burning need to write, you, too, may have the gift successful authors possess . . . the recurring ache to put into words your innermost thoughts, your own experiences.

Max Shulman started writing because ". . . it was write or bust." Faith Baldwin, after 80 novels, still says: "I've never written exactly what I dreamed I'd write . . . you keep on trying." Successful authors like these know that this restless urge for self-expression is perhaps the most important ingredient of writing success. But, they realize it can waste away if you don't know how to get started writing, or if you hesitate to try.

Several years ago they joined forces with Rod Serling, Bennett Cerf, Bruce Catton, Mignon G. Eberhart, John Caples, J. D. Ratcliff, Mark Wiseman, Rudolf Flesch, Red Smith and Bergen Evans, to form the Famous Writers School. They poured everything they knew about writing into a remarkable new kind of professional training course which trains you at home in your spare time. You begin with the fundamentals of all good writing – then specialize in Fiction, Non-Fiction, Advertising Writing or Business Writing.

Each of your assignments is examined by an instructor who is a professional writer or editor. He goes over your work line by line, word by word, blue-penciling his changes right on your manuscript, much as an editor does with an established author. Then he returns it with a long letter of advice and guidance.

This training works well. Our students have sold their writing to the *Reader's Digest, Ladies' Home Journal, Fantasy and Science Fi tion,* and more than 100 other publicatio

Writing Aptitude Test offered

To find out if you, too, have writing abili worth developing, send for the School's revea ing Aptitude Test. If you test well, or offer oth evidence of writing aptitude – you may enro However, there is no obligation to do so.

Famous Writers School
Dept. 6406, Westport Connecticut 06880

I want to know if I have writing aptitude worth developing. Please mail me, without obligation, your Aptitude Test and 48-page brochure.

Mr.
Mrs. .....Age.....
Miss [Circle one and please print]

Street.....

City.....

State.....Zip.....

Accredited by the Accrediting Commission of the National Home Study Council.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED